PRICE TWENTY-FIVE CENTS

PS 635
.Z9
P384
Copy 1

WIVES ON STRIKE

A SATIRICAL COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

BY

LILLIAN SUTTON PELÉE

Fitzgerald Publishing Corporation
SUCCESSOR TO
DICK & FITZGERALD

LENA RIVERS

By MARIE DORAN

This popular and successful comedy drama is now issued in a *copyrighted edition.* It contains all the plots and complete stage directions, is arranged for 5 male and 4 female characters, runs 2¾ hours and has 2 simple interior scenes.

LOW ROYALTY

Price 35 cents per copy

KATHLEEN MAVOURNEEN

New Copyrighted Version. This well-known Irish favorite entirely revised and rewritten by Marie Doran, and so simplified in stage settings that it can be readily produced by amateurs and stock companies. *Low Royalty for Professional Performances.* 8 male and 3 female characters. Runs 2 hours; 1 interior and 1 exterior scene.

Price 25 cents per copy

Fitzgerald Publishing Corporation

Successor to

DICK & FITZGERALD

18 Vesey Street, New York

OCT -5 1920

WIVES ON STRIKE

A Satirical Comedy in Three Acts

BY

LILLIAN SUTTON PELÉE

Copyright, 1920, by
Lillian Sutton Pelée

FITZGERALD PUBLISHING CORPORATION
Successor to
DICK & FITZGERALD
18 Vesey Street New York

NOTE.—The Moving Picture and Professional Acting Rights of this play are expressly reserved by the author, to whom theatrical managers who wish to produce it should apply in care of the Fitzgerald Publishing Corporation, 18 Vesey Street, New York.

Wives On Strike

PS 635
Z9 P38A

CHARACTERS

BETTY ALBRIGHT.....*A bride*
THORNTON ALBRIGHT.....*Her husband, an architect*
REYNOLD WINBURN.....*Betty's admirer*
LILY DE LONGPRÉ.....*A vampire*
CLARA COLLINS.....*Betty's friend*
JANE SPINK.....*Betty's aunt*
BOB SPINK.....*Betty's uncle*
PATRICIA DUGGAN (PAT),
President of Wives' Welfare Club
TOM DUGGAN.....*Her husband, a business man*
URA LAMB.....*Treasurer of Wives' Welfare Club*
JIM LAMB.....*Her husband, a professor of philosophy*
SHESHA NUT.....*Member of Wives' Welfare Club*
JOHN NUT.....*Her husband, a traveling salesman*
Other members of the Wives' Welfare Club, and patrons and waiters of Betty's Diet Kitchen, as desired.

TIME.—To-day.

LOCALITY.—Los Angeles, Cal.

TIME OF PLAYING.—About Two Hours.

SYNOPSIS

ACT I.—Wives' Welfare Club meeting at JANE SPINK'S home.

ACT II.—Dinner at BETTY and THORNTON'S home. Same evening.

ACT III.—Reception room in BETTY'S Diet Kitchen. Six weeks later.

2©CLD 55708

COSTUMES AND CHARACTERISTICS

This is no poor woman's club, as is evident by the stunning gowns that are worn. The women represent that stratum of middle class society who put all the money they can get on their backs, and mortgage their homes to buy a car.

Patricia Duggan, usually referred to as Pat.—a magnificent-looking creature of about thirty. She rather prides herself on her oratorical ability and does everything for effect, covering her limitation with high-handed authority.

Shesha Nut, a simpering nonentity of about twenty-four, with round, staring blue eyes, a nubbin of a nose, an ever-grinning mouth, all fluffs and ruffles.

Ura Lamb, of box-car proportions and feline disposition, somewhere around thirty.

Lily de Longpré, about twenty-five, languorous-eyed, sinuous of movement, very much made up; addicted to clinging robes, which cover without concealing.

Jane Spink, a middle-aged woman, short, stout, and something of a frump, though her dress is of heavy wine-colored satin.

Betty Albright, a buoyant, wholesome young woman of about twenty-two; she presents a very trim appearance in her sport hat and skirt, shirt waist and silk sweater.

Clara Collins, a demure young girl of about eighteen, plump, rosy-cheeked, and wears an inexpensive but dainty frock.

Bob Spink, a middle-aged man. He is bald of head, round of face, and there is a merry twinkle in his eyes.

Thornton Albright, an architect just starting out for himself. He is a well-set-up man of about twenty-eight, the masterful type so much in demand with the fair sex. He comes to conclusions quickly and his opinions stick.

Reynold Winburn, a slight, blonde young man of about twenty-two.

Jim Lamb, a pale-faced, timid man who has studied

other people's thoughts so long that he hasn't an idea of his own. He wears large, horn-rimmed goggles.

TOM DUGGAN, a tired looking business man about forty.

JOHN NUT, an every-day sort of a man about thirty.

INCIDENTAL PROPERTIES

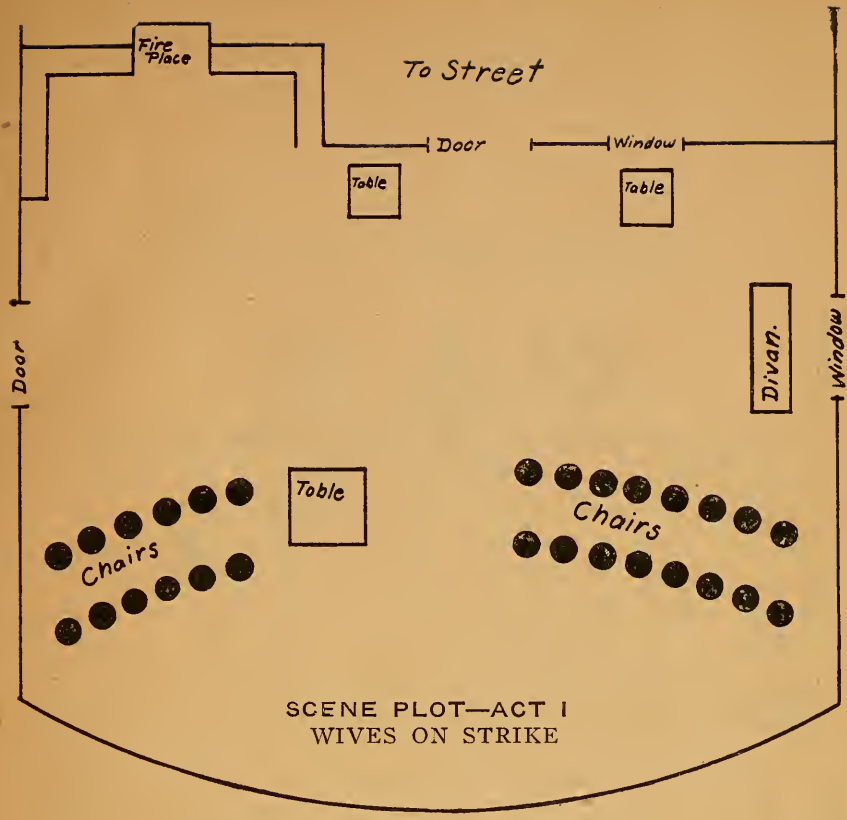
ACT I.—Large cage containing a parrot. Memorandum-book for the secretary. A gavel for PAT. Tray with teacups, sandwiches, cake, etc., as desired.

ACT II.—Newspaper, cigar, bank notes, money and note-book for THORNTON. Wrist watch for LILY. Bungalow apron, plate of food and a plate of corn bread for REYNOLD. Plate containing a covered cake for CLARA. Large hat box, stuffed carryall and the parrot and cage for JANE; the carryall is improvised out of a nightgown bag and bears the inscription "Good Night." Plain table-cloth and silverware in sideboard drawer; dishes, including soup-plates, teapot, etc., on sideboard. A large bowl, baking-dish, platter with meat-loaf and vegetables, salad basket containing lettuce, oil, vinegar, garlic, etc., dish containing celery, tray, soup toureen, and a pie off stage for BETTY. Also hat, coat and handbag for BETTY.

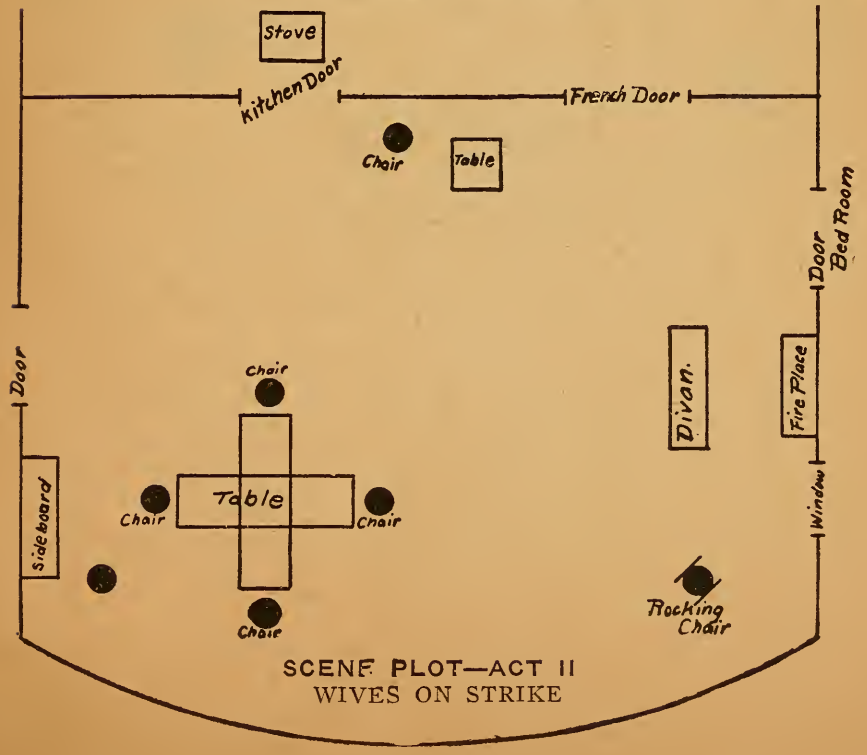
ACT III.—Pad and pencil for JIM. Marabou for PAT.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

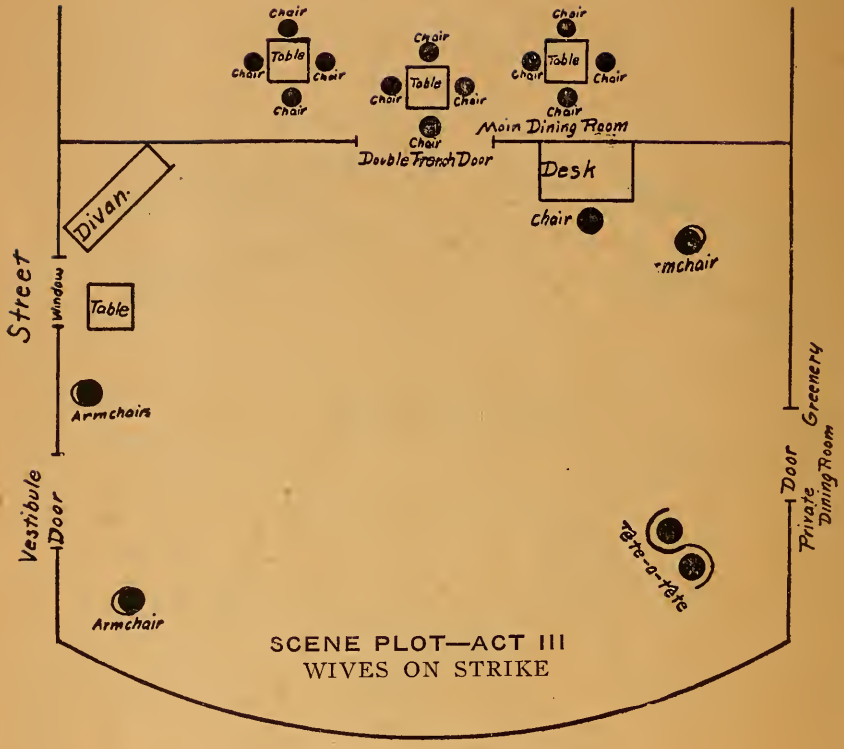
As seen by a performer on the stage facing the audience, R. means right hand; L., left hand; C., center; D. C., center door in rear; D. R., door at right; D. L., door at left; D. R. C., door at right of center; D. L. C., door at left of center; UP means toward back of stage; DOWN, toward footlights.



SCENE PLOT—ACT I
WIVES ON STRIKE



SCENE PLOT—ACT II
WIVES ON STRIKE



SCENE PLOT—ACT III
WIVES ON STRIKE

Wives On Strike

ACT I

SCENE.—*Sitting-room in the* SPINK *residence, old-fashioned, but richly furnished. Two rows of chairs are arranged in semicircles from* R. *to* L. *with a space open in* C. *Small table* R. C. *for chairman; secretary's book on table. A door* C. *leads to street. To* L. *of door is a window, a small table in front of it on which stands a cage with parrot.* R. *of door is another small table with bowl of flowers. Farther* R. *an inglenook where built-in seats leave only sufficient space for the fireplace. At* L., *window with a divan in front. Door at* R. *opens into kitchen. DISCOVERED, the "Wives' Welfare Club" in full swing. It is composed of about a dozen members; all but* BETTY ALBRIGHT *have assembled.* PATRICIA DUGGAN *stands* L. *of table, holding a gavel.* SHESHA NUT *is seated at extreme* L. *in front row. To her* R. *is* URA LAMB. *Next her to the* R. *is* LILY DE LONGPRÉ. JANE SPINK *is seated on front row* R., *next a vacant chair nearest the table, which is reserved for the secretary. Other members are seated on rear chairs, as desired.*

PAT. Ladies and Gents—I mean—Ladies and Wives: We have finished the regular business of our meeting, and now comes the all-important question for which we have met in solemn conclave—The Rights of Wives! I need not enumerate the petty persecutions to which woman has been subjected since the dawn of history by tyrannical man. Something must be done!

OMNES (*speaking in different keys and different tempo, making a discordant jumble*). Yes, something must be done!

PAT. We must act!

URA (*aside to* SHESHA). She's always acting. (SHESHA *titters.* PAT. *gives her a reproving look which causes* SHESHA'S *eyes to grow rounder with solemnity*)

OMNES (*again audible, but not understandable*). Yes, we must act!

PAT. (*impressively*). But how?

JANE (*bounces up*). Madam Chairman!

PAT. (*condescendingly recognizing the floor*). Jane Spink.

JANE. I move that we hold an informal discussion of our difficulties over our teacups before taking any action. (*Sits*)

SHESHA. Tea! (*Giggles*) Oh, lovely!

(NOTE.—Some one must be posted back of scene to imitate parrot.)

PARROT. Polly want a cracker! (*Cries of* "Isn't he a darling?" "How cunning!" *etc.*)

PAT. (*brings down her gavel*). Ladies! Order, please! (*Smiles complacently*) I'm sure Jane's motion will carry unanimously.

URA (*rising with much dignity*). Madam Chairman, I insist that the motion be put in its proper form.

PAT. (*contemptuously*). Ura Lamb, this club is too advanced to be bound by petty rules. Ladies, make yourselves comfortable. (*She drops on vacant chair as if exhausted by her onerous task. Everybody talks at once in a different key.* URA *protests to* SHESHA *and those sitting back of her; they gradually move over to window; some of the women play with the parrot, lending a rather indifferent ear to* URA. *Others ensconce themselves in the inglenook.* SHESHA *joins them there.* JANE *and* LILY *rise, but remain in their places. When* JANE *begins to speak there is a lull*)

JANE (*looks around*). Dear me, hasn't Betty come yet?

PAT. I thought you said she was going to act as secretary.

JANE. She did promise, and she also told me she would be here to help prepare the lunch.

LILY (*with affected manner and insinuating tone*). You don't mean to say, Mrs. Spink, that Betty is a member of this club? Poor girl, is her marriage a failure too?

JANE (*with asperity*). No, Miss Lily de Longpré, my niece's marriage is a complete success—(*Giving* LILY *a sharp look*) through no help from some of her friends.

LILY (*provokingly*). Whom? Reynold Winburn? (*Shoots an insolent glance from under half-closed eyes, then with a saucy toss of her head joins* URA *and others near window*)

JANE (*hurling the words after her*). No, not Reynold Winburn! (*To* PAT.) Thornton had to be a fast runner to elude that creature. The way she tagged after him was disgraceful.

PAT. Did Betty know she was coming here to-day?

JANE. I don't know, but that wouldn't have kept her away. Betty has too much common sense to be jealous, especially of that breed.

ENTER BETTY *and* CLARA, D. C.

BETTY. Hello, everybody!

PAT. Glad to see you, Betty. (*Nods pleasantly and goes to inglenook*)

BETTY. Hope I didn't keep you waiting, auntie. I brought Clara along. Isn't it lovely that she has moved right next door to us? (GOES C., JANE *is* R. *and* CLARA L.)

JANE. But Clara isn't married and this club is for married ladies only.

BETTY. But she may be soon. (*Laughs*) I have a husband all picked out for her.

CLARA (*modestly*). Oh, you!

BETTY. Don't waste blushes on women, Clara. Keep them for Reynold. A girl that can still blush these blushless days can bring any man to her feet.

CLARA (*to* JANE). Betty said you might like me to help serve.

JANE. Indeed I would, and maybe you can pick up some helpful information about the ways of man. Betty, I expected you much earlier.

BETTY. I'm sorry, auntie, but the house took longer to straighten than I anticipated.

JANE (*severely*). Betty, you're not spoiling your husband after all my training, are you?

BETTY (*laughing*). No spoiling Thornton. He's like fruit cake, the longer it's kept the better it gets.

JANE (*with a sniff of disdain*). There's no reasoning with a love-sick fool. You give me the fidgets. All these guests and Bridget gone!

BETTY (*astonished*). The cook left too? (*Consolingly*) Ah, what a shame!

JANE. I didn't care so much about the chambermaid leaving, but to lose the cook! And you know what a crank your uncle is about his meals.

BETTY. Poor Uncle Bob!

JANE (*irascibly*). Why do you say that?

BETTY. Oh, I don't know. Why did the cook leave?

JANE. Goodness only knows. She said something about a sympathy strike. It certainly wasn't sympathy for me. The ungrateful creature walked out in the middle of sandwich making. (*Gives gesture of despair*)

CLARA. Isn't it dreadful, the number of strikes there are now?

BETTY (*patting* JANE). Don't worry, auntie. We'll fix everything in a jiffy. I didn't specialize in domestic science for nothing. Come on, Clara, it will give the "Wives' Welfare Club" time to discuss ——

CLARA (*innocently*). Their husbands?

BETTY. No, dear—each other. (*She laughs*)

[EXIT BETTY, CLARA *and* JANE D. R.

URA (*to* LILY). Lily, I want you to meet our presi-

dent. (*Confidentially*) She doesn't know a parliamentary rule from a golf stick. Her stupidity is almost masculine. (PAT. *and* SHESHA *go from inglenook down* R. C., *talking together*)

LILY. Mrs. Lamb, I feel as if I had got into the wrong stall with all you married women. This is no place for a lone bachelor maid with matrimonial inclinations.

URA. You have had so much more experience, my dear, than we have, I thought you might give us a pointer or two.

LILY (*annoyed by the inference*). Now—I say ——

URA. Don't say—meet—our president, Patricia Duggan, lovingly dubbed Pat by us. (*Smiles sweetly on* PAT. *but conveys her sarcasm by a glance to* LILY) And Shesha Nut. (SHESHA *smiles vacuously.* PAT. *is* R. C., SHESHA C., URA L. C., *and* LILY *to her* L.)

PAT. (*crosses over and extends her hand to* LILY). This is a pleasure, Mrs. ———?

URA. *Miss* Lily de Lougpré.

PAT. (*surprised*). Miss? Here?

URA. That's all right. I invited her. She has had so much ——

LILY (*haughtily*). Please do not give out any wrong impressions. Only married women can afford to be promiscuous. Remember, my third finger is still uncorseted.

URA (*laughs*). No wedding ring to bind! (*To* PAT.) Don't you think Miss de Longpré would be a valuable addition to us? (*With meaning as she exchanges a knowing look with* SHESHA) We need somebody in this club with an idea or two.

PAT. (*vexed*). If you employ as much tact with your husband, Ura Lamb, as you do in your club work, I should think he would prefer alimony to matrimony.

LILY (*to* PAT.). How long have you been organized?

SHESHA (*has been listening with a stupid smile on her face. Her mind works for a moment*). A year ago last New Year, wasn't it, Pat?

PAT. (*with a crushing look*). No, Fourth of July.

SHESHA. I knew it had something to do with resolutions. (*Gives a childish laugh as she claps her hands gleefully*) I have it! "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

LILY (*to* PAT.). I'm not quite clear as to the purpose of your club.

SHESHA (*a look of bewilderment coming over her face*). The purpose? What *is* our purpose, Pat? I never thought to ask.

PAT. (*gives* SHESHA *a disdainful look which causes the fatuous smile to change to wonder.* PAT., *turning to* LILY, *prepares to display her oratory*). We have banded ourselves together —— (*Some of the women look up and snicker as* PAT.'S *voice rings out*)

URA (*winks at* SHESHA). Pat, I think I hear Jane calling you.

LILY. What a funny club! Everybody calls the other by her given name.

PAT. (*with extreme sobriety*). Our mutual trials relate us more closely. We are one in bondage! (*Makes a theatrical sweep toward* D. R.)

LILY (*following her*). But don't you think there are times when the man has something on his side?

URA (*aside to* SHESHA). Sympathizing with husbands is the stock in trade of vamps.

PAT. (*turning on* LILY *patronizingly*). My child, you speak with the tongue of inexperience. To-day you may learn sufficient from our trials and tribulations to save yourself from a like fate. (*As she* GOES *toward* D. R.) I'm coming, Jane. (LILY GOES *to inglenook*)

[EXIT PAT. D. R.

SHESHA (*to* URA). Who is that Miss de Longpré?

URA. An old flame of Betty's husband. She and Betty used to be classmates. Watch and you'll see some sparks fly this afternoon.

SHESHA. I'm surprised that Betty didn't let her have him. Reynold Winburn is such a tame young thing, and he has heaps more money than Thornton, and he sure was dippy over Betty.

URA. Probably the opposition decided her. You know Betty has a will of her own when aroused.

SHESHA. My John thinks Thornton the finest ever, but I think he's dreadfully selfish.

URA. Well, I certainly don't see anything so attractive about him for women to fight over him. He has always treated me with the courtesy of a polar bear. (SHESHA *titters*)

ENTER BETTY, JANE, PAT. *and* CLARA D. R., *carrying the tea things.* JANE *pours tea from table* R. *The others distribute sandwiches, cakes and tea. Some of the women come forward from inglenook and get their tea themselves. Others remain standing or sitting, ready to be served.* URA *takes chair up by window.*

JANE (*to* SHESHA, *who has advanced to her with childish anticipation*). Strong or weak, Shesha?

SHESHA. Strong. My poor nerves! (*Takes tea, sips it as she goes and sits by* URA. *In the meantime some one else has given* URA *her tea and cakes*) What delicious tea, Jane! (*Giggles*) This is the best part of the meeting. (*Some of the women look pityingly at* SHESHA *and smile among themselves*)

LILY (GOES *to* BETTY L. C. *and extends her hand for tea, which* BETTY *gives her*). So, Betty, you have joined the disgruntled wives too? (*Insinuatingly*) Does Thornton approve?

BETTY (*cheerfully*). This is my first appearance in the camp of destruction. Aunt Jane enveigled me into paying my dues and asked me to serve temporarily as secretary. She didn't tell me anything about their foolish notions, but I got a pretty good idea from Pat in there. (*Nods toward kitchen*) It's ridiculous! I don't want you to think ——

LILY (*knowingly*). You're a sly one! You can match your wits against Thornton or any other man, my dear.

BETTY. But you're altogether mistaken. There isn't the tiniest speck of a cloud on my matrimonial sky.

URA (*aside to* SHESHA *as they lean forward to catch* LILY'S *and* BETTY'S *words*). Betty must be blind not to see a cyclone rising in tiger-Lily's eyes.

LILY (*sympathetically*). You don't need to act before me, Betty. I was afraid you wouldn't find Thornton quite all he made himself out to be. So long as he was dazzling you with his well-arranged halo, I wouldn't demolish the sacred image you were deifying, but now if you are ready for the truth ——

BETTY (*with earnest protest*). But I tell you ——

LILY. Oh, if you prefer the delusion —— (*Shrugs her shoulders. Then insinuatingly*) By the way, have you seen Reynold Winburn since your marriage?

BETTY (*frankly*). Of course. He and Thornton are like brothers.

LILY. Oh-h-h! Is that Rennie's pose? (*Laughs*) Then he didn't drown himself in the deep blue sea?

BETTY (*annoyed*). Surely you don't take an infant like that seriously?

LILY. A twenty-two-year-old infant is able to toddle about alone a bit. (*Leers over her shoulder as she joins some of the women at extreme* R.)

BETTY (*so confused that she passes tea to an empty chair*). Tea, madam?

JANE (*has been keeping an eye on* BETTY *and* LILY *while serving tea*). Betty! (BETTY *sees her mistake and tries to cover her confusion by overdone gayety*)

SHESHA (*rises and comes forward with her cup*). Is there plenty of tea?

BETTY. Oh, heaps. (*Laughs self-consciously*) I mean plenty. Isn't this a jolly party? (*Turns away and serves others.* CLARA *passes cakes to* LILY)

LILY. Hello, Clara. I saw you out motoring with Reynold Winburn the other day. (*She moves away from ladies so that she and* CLARA *are by themselves. The others disperse for other interests*) Is he seeking solace?

CLARA (*timidly*). I don't know what you mean.

LILY (*chucks her under the chin*). Oh, Miss Innocence! Don't let the wicked men fool you. Reynold is a knowing one.

CLARA. Mr. Winburn is very courteous and kind to every one.

LILY. Especially to Betty, eh?

CLARA (*flushing*). I don't think it is a bit nice of you to speak in that insinuating way about Mr. Winburn. He wouldn't wrong anybody for the world.

LILY. When a girl begins to defend a man—look out for the little fellow with the bow and arrow, and don't forget that when the dart has hit it's not easy to pluck out.

CLARA. A person should always defend his friends.

LILY. Friends? Oh, my dear, do you still cling to that illusion?

CLARA (*earnestly*). Miss de Longpré, why do you always sneer at everything that is good and true?

LILY. I don't. That is why I am warning you. I can't bear to see such a mild little rabbit made a dupe, just because she is poor and trusting.

CLARA (*flushing*). Riches are not everything to everybody. Betty and Mr. Winburn value people for themselves.

LILY (*shakes her head as she moves away*). Love is certainly myopic. (CLARA *begins to collect the empty dishes.* JANE *removes the tea service from table and gives it to* CLARA, *who takes it to the kitchen, returning at once. One cup is left on table* R. C. PAT. *comes to table and taps with her gavel. Some of the women set their empty cups on chairs and seats in inglenook, others retain their cups, leisurely finishing their tea, then put the cups on any available place. All quickly take seats, talking as they do so.* JANE, URA, SHESHA *and* LILY *resume former chairs.* SHESHA *keeps sipping tea and munching cakes, happy as a child at a party.* BETTY *sits* R. *of table* R. C.)

PAT. (*as* BETTY *takes secretary's book from table and*

sits in chair R. *of it*). You need not keep any record, Betty. The subject we are to discuss is of a very delicate nature, and some of the ladies might object to having their opinions of their husbands preserved in ink. (*There is a flurried movement among the women*) Ladies, order, please! Let us discuss the question of the afternoon with calmness and frankness. Remember, every one here has her hidden skeleton. (LILY *glances triumphantly at* BETTY, *who haughtily raises her brows*)

BETTY. I beg your pardon, the only skeleton I ever came in contact with was in the school laboratory.

PAT. (*severely*). Indeed! How long have you been married?

JANE (*sniffing*). Thirty —— (*Every one looks surprised*) days. (*They all laugh except* BETTY, *who is annoyed, and* PAT., *who never forgets her dignity*)

BETTY (*vexed*). But I have known Thornton for years.

JANE (*with decision*). No woman ever knows a man until she lives with him.

LILY (*sweetly*). Even then she only knows what he sees fit to tell her.

BETTY (*blazing*). I need no one to introduce me to my husband.

JANE. Have a care, Betty, that you don't make him out too good to be true. (LILY *laughs*)

PAT. Ladies, we must be tolerant of ignorance. Betty's moon is still in the honey stage. Some day she may find it turned to limburger. (BETTY *rises and* GOES *and sits with* CLARA *in inglenook*)

URA (*whispers to* SHESHA). I always suspected Pat was pro-German. She should be recalled.

PAT. (*marshalling all her oratorical powers*). Before we women, who bear the heavy yoke of matrimony, take any final action, let each lift the veil from her hidden wrongs, that we may be enabled through this interchange of experiences to select the wisest course. You well know how woman has always borne her trials in silence, with never a murmur of complaint against her

lord and master —— (LILY *bursts out laughing.* PAT. *brings down her gavel and smashes a teacup, much to* JANE'S *annoyance*) Young woman, this is a serious meeting, not a vaudeville show. (LILY *is properly squelched*) But in so noble a cause we must not indulge in false pride. Personally I feel that I can no longer submit ——

URA (*to* SHESHA *and* LILY). She's off in a bunch.

PAT. (*overhears her and frowns*). Ladies, as leader of your splendid organization, it is my duty so to appear in public that I shall not bring shame to you. But because of my husband's stinginess I am forced to wear these —— (*Lifts a part of her dress where a piece of lace has unraveled*) rags!

POLLY. Good night! (*General laugh.* WOMEN *nudge each other, evidently commenting on* PAT.'S *clothes*)

URA (*to* SHESHA *and* LILY *as she motions to* PAT.). A real Paquin gown.

PAT. (*turns to women seated in rear row* R.). We are familiar with Maggie's, Dolly's and Peggy's troubles. (*Turning to those in rear seats* L.) And the difficulties of these ladies were discussed before lunch.

SHESHA. Is there any more tea?

PAT. (*scowls at* SHESHA, *who never can understand what she has done to merit rebuke, and always expresses her astonishment by a rounding of eyes.* PAT. *turns to* LILY). Being unmarried, Miss de Longpré can add nothing to our subject.

LILY. Oh, but I could if you would let me.

JANE. Don't let her. Before you know it, she will have you all in the divorce court, and have sailed off with your husbands. (WOMEN *laugh*)

PAT. I wish some one would sail off with mine, then I could sue for damages.

SHESHA. To your heart, Pat?

PAT. No, to my wardrobe. (*To* URA) Ura Lamb, we know full well what you have had to put up with from your brute of a husband.

URA. How dare you?

PAT. I but repeated your own words.

URA (*rises*). Ladies, I protest!

SHESHA (*tittering*). Tea has such a soothing effect on the nerves.

LILY. Though not a member of your club, I must express my approval of Mrs. Lamb's attitude toward much misused man.

URA (*turns on* LILY *pugnaciously*). My husband may imagine he can handle me with cave-man methods, but I need no outside help to handle him. (*Flounces up to inglenook*)

LILY (*to* SHESHA). Poor Jimmie!

BETTY (GOES *down* L. *of* PAT.). Ladies, I suppose you are all on your way, but I fail to see where you are going.

JANE (*reprovingly*). Betty, young wives should sit at the feet of experience.

BETTY. And old wives should eat less sugars and fats, starches and meats, to keep their heads clear.

PAT. What has diet to do with getting on with husbands?

BETTY. Everything. Over feeding and under exercising upset the digestion and spoil the disposition.

JANE. Pay no attention, ladies. Betty is a food crank.

PAT. (*tartly*). This is no pure food show. (BETTY *shrugs her shoulders as though argument were useless and resumes her former seat by aunt*) Our subject is man, corrupt man, especially our own particular man. Shesha Nut, have you any charges to prefer against your husband?

SHESHA (*promptly*). I should say I have.

PAT. (*importantly*). We will listen to them.

SHESHA. My husband is a —— (*Stops dead still, her face a blank. The majority of the women are eager for something salacious. Cries of* "Do tell us!" *etc. Neither* BETTY *nor* CLARA *ever enter into the spirit.* BETTY *looks bored when not annoyed, and* CLARA *looks ashamed*)

PAT. (*indulgently*). Go on; we are beyond being shocked.

SHESHA (*her mental clock again begins to tick*). My husband has a —— (*Stops*)

PAT. (*shocked but curious*). A soul mate?

SHESHA (*stares blankly a moment, then angrily*). Certainly not! I'm John's first and only love. (*General titter*)

POLLY. Good night. (*Burst of laughter*)

LILY (*to woman behind her*). Do they permit him at large?

URA (*to* CLARA). He must have married her on a bet.

PAT. (*severely*). Mrs. Nut, our time is limited. What—is—the matter with your husband?

SHESHA (*astonished*). Matter with him? (*Simply*) There's nothing the matter with him.

PAT. (*threateningly*). Then why are you here?

SHESHA. I thought you women might tell me some way to make my husband lose his temper. (*Smiles inanely*) It would be such fun to see John mad just once.

OMNES (*there is a general uproar*). Put her out!

PAT. Order, ladies, order! Although this woman has entered our organization under false colors, remember we are not Bolshevists. (*Smiles condescendingly on* BETTY) Betty is too new at the game to add to our arraignment.

BETTY (*rises*). Madam Chairman, I am a paid-up member of this club, and I insist on being heard. When I joined the "Wives' Welfare Club" I was under the impression that it was a constructive organization. You ridicule me because I am newly wed. I hope when I am oldly wed I shall not be less cognizant of my husband's virtues than I am now.

JANE (*decidedly*). Husbands have no virtues.

BETTY (*firmly*). Mine has. (*Sits*)

JANE. Ladies, we all recall our own loudly voiced praise of our husbands after one long month of married life.

PAT. Jane, we have not yet heard from you. What impels you to support our movement?

JANE (*rises*). Betty, look out and see that your uncle is not in sight.

BETTY (*protesting*). Now, auntie, please ——

JANE. Betty, you are very young and very ignorant, and though you lived under this roof all your life, very un-ob-ser-ving.

BETTY (*as she* GOES *to window*). Of course, if you insist.

JANE. I do. Ladies: I have heard you and your complaints. They are many and much, but mine are more and more. (*Some of the women ejaculate* "Oh!") Yes, my husband — (*Stops for some accusation, then in a militant tone*) smokes up the curtains!

BETTY. Not since the doctor told Uncle Bob he wouldn't live the year out if he didn't stop.

JANE (*sharply*). Betty, you will please keep your tongue between your teeth and your eyes on the road. (*To others*) When I tell you that my husband's reformation was not brought about through change of heart, but because our family physician is a good friend of mine, you will readily see he deserves no credit. Mrs. Lamb, you say your husband is a cave man.

URA. I didn't.

JANE. Mrs. Chairman, have I the floor? (PAT. *nods*) Ladies, do you know what would happen were my husband to enter that door and find you here? (*With apprehension*) He isn't in sight, is he, Betty?

BETTY. No, aunt.

JANE. Should he surprise our bold conference, he would —— (*Dramatic pause*) to use his own words, "CLEAN OUT THE PLACE!" (*General uproar. Cries of* "Shocking!" "Violence!" "We'd better go!") Calm yourselves, ladies. It is not yet five. We have time to finish our important business. Ladies, you all know my husband is not a poor man, yet this very afternoon I was obliged to serve you tea with my own hands—and why? Because no servant will submit to his tyranny.

BETTY. O auntie!

JANE (*thunderously*). Silence! I will no longer suppress the truth. (*The ladies anticipate some terrible revelation, as their significant looks assert.* JANE'S *words increase in momentum until she loses her breath*) My husband is a glutton, a cormorant, a libertine, a loose fish, a rip, a rogue, a rake-hell, a toper, a tippler, a tyrant, a bully, a chronic crank, (*Slows down*) and—he would gamble the very roof from off our heads if I ever let him handle more than two bits at any one time. (BETTY *has turned away from window and is looking at her aunt in open-eyed wonder. The other women exclaim* "Ah!" "Oh!" "No!") Yes. Ladies, in the twenty-four years that we have been married, I have vainly searched through all divorce proceedings to find one wickedness that some other man possesses which my husband does not have.

PAT. (*slightly sarcastic*). At least, you are still alive.

JANE. Barely.

LILY. May I ask the speaker a question?

PAT. (*not liking* LILY'S *interruption*). Be brief.

LILY (*sweetly*). Will you permit me to visit your harem? Surely all these qualities can not belong to one lone man.

ENTER BOB SPINK D. C. *Stands in doorway grinning, overcome with embarrassment. The women turn at the creak of door, a look of terror overspreads their faces.* BOB *fairly beams on them.*

BOB. Pardon intrusion. Ladies, I didn't know my wife had company. Glad to meet you, ladies. (*Bows awkwardly* R. *and* L. *still smiling amiably*)

JANE (*sternly*). Bob Spink, you knew the "Wives' Welfare Club" was to meet here this afternoon.

BOB (*with embarrassed laugh*). Clean slipped my mind, my love. Ladies'll forgive intrusion—so sorry—too bad—— (*Effaces himself. Draws door together softly.* WOMEN *look at each other, then at* JANE *for explanation*)

JANE (*equal to the occasion*). Wouldn't you think his wings were about to sprout? Put on, my dears, all put on before you.

PAT. Ladies, we must take some action before the meeting adjourns. What do you propose to do to these men?

JANE. I move a strike. (*Everybody terrificd. Cries of* "Strike!" "Oh!" BETTY *alone maintains her poise*) I move that we walk out of our husbands' houses this very night and never return until they accede to our demands.

SHESHA. But I haven't any demands.

JANE (*with withering scorn*). Then fake some.

PAT. We must not act with undue haste. Do not lose sight of the fact that we are dependent on these creatures.

URA (*empties purse*). And I've only five cents car fare.

JANE (*with asperity*). Question!

PAT. (*resignedly*). Ladies, it is moved that we go on strike. Do I hear a second?

JANE. I second the motion.

URA (*with disdain*). You can't second your own motion.

SHESHA. I make the motion.

PAT. (*bitingly*). You mean you second it.

SHESHA (*with a nod of assent*). Uh, huh.

PAT. It has been moved and seconded that the "Wives' Welfare Club" go on strike. The question is before the house for discussion.

BETTY (GOES DOWN *to* L. *of* PAT.). I presume there is sufficient money in the treasury to support the strikers?

PAT. Mrs. Treasurer, how much money do we have?

URA (GOES DOWN *to* PAT.'S R., *looks in her book*). Forty-nine—cents. (*General consternation*)

PAT. I suggest that Jane withdraw her motion and we delegate one of our members to go on strike and make this a test case.

OMNES. Fine!

PAT. If we all walked out we might force our husbands to some concerted action. The success of one will mean the success of all.

BETTY. How?

JANE. I withdraw my motion.

PAT. It will be a club to hold over our husbands' heads. We can get some idea of just how far we *can* go with these slave drivers.

URA (*aside to ladies to her right*). Rest of us! (*Aloud*) I move that our noble president, Pat Duggan, be given the honor to become the first wife on strike in this "land of the brave and home of the free."

PAT. (*scared*). Heavens, you don't know what you are asking! Tom is on the fence about buying me a set of marabou. The slightest jar might be fatal. Besides, ladies, I am modest. I do not deserve such an honor. Perhaps some one will volunteer for this enviable position. (*Dead silence*)

SHESHA. Let Pat appoint the striker.

PAT. Then you, Mrs. Nut.

SHESHA. No; I'm sure John would think it some practical joke. Traveling salesmen always see the funny side of things. It would be just like him to try to pay me back. I'll take no chances with so many (*Looks meaningly at* LILY) strike breakers about.

PAT. As Jane's husband represents all the vices that the flesh of man can hold, I nominate her.

JANE. But if I go on strike I can't stay here. Where'll I go? Will the "Wives' Welfare Club" finance ——

PAT. (*breaks in*). Surely you have some relative who would gladly take you in. (*Glances significantly at* BETTY)

JANE. Splendid! Betty, I'll come and watch over you and Thornton. (BETTY, *not much pleased, drops on vacant chair to her* L.) I'm sure such a paragon as he needs watching. But you ladies understand there will be other expenses. It takes cash to blazon the road to

independence. I am assured of your support? (*Each looks at her neighbor with a look that means no money need be expected from her*)

PAT. (*sensing the sentiment*). Certainly; moral support. Meeting adjourned. (*A hurried movement that prevents further discussion. General hubbub as they prepare to leave.* PAT. *brings down gavel as they crowd to* D. C.) Ladies, before you go, let us give three cheers for the first wife on strike! (*They respond heartily*)

[EXIT *all* WOMEN, D. C., *excepting* BETTY, JANE *and* CLARA

CLARA (*to* BETTY). I think I'd better go too.

BETTY. All right. I have to stop and do some shopping for dinner.

CLARA (*to* JANE). It was a most interesting afternoon.

JANE. I hope we have taught you a few things.

CLARA. Oh, you have. [EXIT D. C.

BETTY. Auntie, I can't believe it. Surely you are not serious?

JANE. Indeed I am. The cook has left just once too often.

BETTY. But, auntie, why blame Uncle Bob?

JANE. Betty, when you've been married as long as I have, you'll know that the man is always to blame for everything. (BETTY *tries to protest*) Not another word. Run along and lay the table for three.

BETTY. Thornton will be terribly shocked. He's so fond of you both.

JANE. Thornton's state of mind is of complete indifference to me. One word from him and I'll show him his place.

ENTER BOB D. C.

BOB. Hello, Betty, not going without a glad word for Uncle Bob, are you? How's the lucky groom?

BETTY. Sweeter every day.

JANE. Betty!

BETTY. Yes, I must go. I don't want to keep him waiting for dinner.

BOB. Don't suppose we old folks are much of a magnet until the honeymoon wanes.

BETTY. Yes, you are. But our honeymoon isn't going into decline.

JANE. Pish!

BETTY (*kisses* BOB). Bye, bye, Uncle Bob! (*As she runs out*) Bye, bye, auntie! [EXIT D. C.

BOB (*beaming after her*). Lovely child!

JANE. Everybody is lovely but your own wife.

BOB. Oh, my dear, you're not cross because I butted in on your meeting, are you? Word of honor, it clean slipped my mind. Nice ladies, aren't they?

JANE (*snaps out*). No, they're not. A lot of old cats! (*Turns to husband*) How dare you come home before five? You did it on purpose to let my friends know it was time for them to leave.

BOB. 'Pon my word, never thought ——

JANE. No, you never think—of any one but yourself.

BOB. You always get everything you ask for. What do you want now?

JANE. I want a cook—that will stay.

BOB. But, my dear, I haven't one in my pocket.

JANE. Sarcasm, cheap sarcasm! That's your strong point.

BOB. Oh, let the old cook go to ——

JANE. Bob Spink, you're swearing!

POLLY. Polly want a cracker.

BOB (*laughs*). And Jenny wants a cook. Never mind, old girl, let us go out to a restaurant to dinner.

JANE. Don't call me old girl.

BOB. Then, young lady. (*Chuckles*)

JANE. You're trying to make up, but it's no go this time.

BOB. Sakes alive! I didn't know we had fallen out.

JANE. Well, you know it now—and—I've put up with you for four and twenty years. Henceforth, you can

get somebody else to cook for you, wash for you, make your bed, and somebody to ——

BOB. Now, Jane, you know I wouldn't be untrue to you.

JANE. I don't care what you do. (*Shouts*) I'm on strike!

BOB (*amazed*). On strike?

JANE. Everybody else in the country is on strike. Why not the wives? The whole world is demanding greater freedom.

BOB (*mildly*). The ladies don't want greater freedom of speech, do they, love?

JANE. Don't try to be witty! We wives are going to walk out and we'll stay out until you men accede to our demands.

BOB. What demands?

JANE (*nonplussed, then giving the usual feminine answer when cornered*). You think you're smart, don't you? I quit the job! (*Grabs parrot cage and rushes out, knocking over a couple of chairs*) I'm on strike! I'm on strike! [EXIT D. C.

BOB (*looks after her, chuckles, and shakes his head*). Poor Jane! (*Glances around at the disorder, chairs bunched, remains of lunch on every available place*) Whew! (*Shakes his head*) It sure is hell when the cook goes on strike! (*Begins to clear away the tea things, whistling the "Marseillaise" out of tune*)

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE.—*Dining-room in* BETTY *and* THORNTON'S *bungalow. It is cheery and dainty with its gaily colored chintz curtains. All the furniture except an overstuffed rocking-chair is made out of boxes painted and attractively decorated. There is a small sideboard* DOWN R. *with pretty china that blends in with the color scheme. A comfortable rocker* DOWN L. *The table* R. C. *is made of two wide boards crossed, covered with embroidered runners; in the* C. *a bowl of flowers. At each wing of table is a chair. In the rear flat* R. *of* C. *is a door leading to kitchen; this door is now ajar and a gas stove is plainly visible.* L. *of* C. *are French doors leading to street. Door at* L. *leads to bedroom. Door at* R. *opens into back garden. Chair* L. *of kitchen door, also one* DOWN R. *corner near sideboard. Window* DOWN L. *Fireplace between door and window, with divan in front of it. Clock on mantle. As the curtain rises* THORNTON *is heard whistling outside* D. L. C.

ENTER THORNTON D. L. C., *in high spirits.*

THORNTON (*as he enters*). Hello there, wifey! (*Throws hat on divan* L., *coat on chair* L. *of table, and paper on table. His quickness shows that he is energetic. Calls*) Sweetheart! (*Makes for kitchen and is confronted by the cold gas stove. Starts back disappointed*) How's this? No dinner on? (*Runs over to* D. L., *a trifle annoyed*) Say, Betty, do you know what time it is? (*Opens door, peeks in. Slowly*) Wh-e-re the Dickens —— (*Glances toward* D. R.; *laughs*) I have it! Picking fresh flowers for the table. Dear, sentimental girl! (*As he runs out* D. R., *leaving it ajar*) Here, there, Betty, more beefsteak and less roses!

ENTER BETTY D. L. C. *hurriedly, laden with parcels, sees* THORNTON'S *hat and the open* D. R.

BETTY (*disappointed*). Oh, pshaw, he's here first!

Isn't that too bad! (*Drops parcels on table and runs to* D. R.) Thornton, sweetheart, did I keep you waiting long?

ENTER THORNTON D. R.

BETTY (*throws arms around his neck and kisses him*). Dear old widower!

THORNTON (*petulantly*). Betty, where have you been? (CROSSES *to* L. C.) I'm famished!

BETTY. Don't you remember? I told you I promised auntie to help her serve tea at the "Wives' Welfare Club"? (*Laughs*) That was the funniest meeting!

THORNTON (*doesn't hear what she is saying*). If you think a cold gas stove is a warm reception to a hungry man, you're off your top.

BETTY (*pats his face. He sulks*). Poor star-ved, abused husband! (*Runs into kitchen,* D. R. C., *turns on faucet and fills teakettle while she lights the top oven of range*) The pot will be boiling in a second, and everything is ready to pop right into the oven. (GOES *to table*)

THORNTON (*picks up paper savagely, opens it as if about to read, grumbles*). Canned food to-night, I suppose?

BETTY (*laughs merrily*). No, siree, nothing doing. Canned goods have broken up many a happy family. (*Removes parcels to sideboard*) Fixed everything before I left. You sit over there in that easy-chair and read your paper.

THORNTON (*throws down paper*). Already read it.

BETTY. Coming out on the car? That's bad for the eyes. Then help me set the table. (*Hands him coat*)

THORNTON (*takes it and throws it down on divan*). I'll be blamed —— (BETTY *looks surprised*) Look here, Betty, you think I'm going to work like a slave all day and come home and set tables?

BETTY. I thought after bending over drawing so many hours you might like the exercise, but if you're tired, sit down, honey. Draw up that rocker and I'll tell

you all about that funny meeting. It was better than any play. (THORNTON *throws himself savagely in rocking-chair* L. *and begins to read paper.* BETTY *whips off runners from table, folds them and replaces them with plain linen ones. She takes silver and dishes from side-board and sets table for three*)

THORNTON (*furtively watching her*). Who's the third person?

BETTY. Oh, Thornton, I'm not quite sure if the end of the play was a comedy or tragedy.

THORNTON. The end of this one'll be a tragedy if that dinner doesn't get here pretty soon.

BETTY (*laughs; then becomes serious*). But no joke, Thornton; Aunt Jane has left Uncle Bob. Isn't that dreadful?

THORNTON. Nonsense! That aunt of yours has been threatening to leave ever since I've known her. Where would she go, I'd like to know?

BETTY. She's coming here.

THORNTON (*jumps up excitedly*). Here?

BETTY. Yes; to stay.

THORNTON. Stay? Not much!

BETTY. Maybe she won't stay long.

THORNTON. Maybe? Huh ha! You can bet your brand new hat she won't.

BETTY. But, Thornton ——

THORNTON. No, you can't talk to me. I won't have it! Won't have it! I'll quit the house!

BETTY. Goodness! Goodness! Don't get so excited. How could I tell her not to come after I've spent my whole life in their home?

THORNTON (*drops into chair again*). That's what we get for placing ourselves under obligations. Damn it!

BETTY (*coyly*). You—swore. That's the first time I ever heard you swear.

THORNTON. It won't be the last if that aunt of yours camps on us long.

BETTY (*laughs and whispers*). I thought damn myself.

THORNTON (*reprovingly*). Betty!

BETTY. Oh, but I didn't say it. (*Becomes serious*) Anyway, dearest, we must make the best of it, and besides, to be under your influence will do Aunt Jane a world of good. (THORNTON'S *pride responds*) She'll leave this house with an entirely new idea of husbands. (GOES *into kitchen*)

THORNTON (*between his teeth*). Bet your sweet life she will.

BETTY (*returning with baking dish*). See that lovely meat loaf? Now, into the oven with you, and all ready in ten minutes. (*Puts meat in oven*)

THORNTON. Call that a dinner? Hash?

BETTY (*disappointed*). Why, Thornton, the last time I made it you said to repeat the dose at least twice a week. It's braised with carrots and onions and all sorts of good things. (*Regaining her spirits*) I'm going to turn the salad in here while I tell you how Aunt Jane happened to go on strike. (*Brings big bowl to table, also salad basket full of lettuce, oil, lemon, salt, pepper, and a clove of garlic. She rubs the garlic around bowl, prepares dressing, gives salad a few shakes, and empties it into the bowl, and turns it*)

THORNTON. On strike?

BETTY. At first they voted that all the wives should go on strike.

THORNTON. Wives on strike! (*Laughs*) That's rich! Suckling babes'll start a union next. And the fool men gave these creatures the vote!

BETTY (*surprised*). Fool men?

THORNTON. Idiots! I told them they were crazy, but they wouldn't believe me.

BETTY (*astonished*). Thornton Albright, do you mean you didn't vote for woman suffrage?

THORNTON. Suffrage? For a bunch of nuts!

BETTY. But, Thornton, there's a certain percentage of fools among men too. (*Indignant*) The males don't have a monopoly on intelligence. Don't you think I know enough to vote?

THORNTON. I'll do your voting.

BETTY. But I don't want any man to do my ——

THORNTON. Betty, I'm starved! Will you hurry up that dinner?

BETTY (*mystified as she* GOES *and looks in oven*). And to think of the way he praised my campaign speeches!

THORNTON. Didn't think I was going to take a chance on losing out just because of a little hot air, did you? (BETTY *comes back and walks about, a bit dazed, as if she were trying to think what next to do*) These women that go around roasting their husbands to everybody who will lend them an ear ought to be tarred and feathered and rode out of town on a rail.

BETTY (*still* GOING *round in a circle. To herself*). And to think he didn't even vote for us!

THORNTON. Here I thought we were going to have a nice, cozy dinner with Reynold and ——

BETTY (*waking up*). Is Reynold coming to dinner again to-day? (*Remembers it is the teapot she is looking for; gets it off sideboard*)

THORNTON. I forgot to tell you. Set another plate.

BETTY. I wish you wouldn't invite him here so often.

THORNTON. You don't expect me to give up all my pals just because I'm married, do you?

BETTY. But, Thornton, that boy annoys me to death with his love-making. He doesn't seem to realize that I'm married. I should think you'd be jealous.

THORNTON. Jealous of a kid like him? I'm not quite off my head yet.

BETTY. I know he doesn't mean any harm, but it's what other people think. Lily de Longpré was at the meeting this afternoon.

THORNTON (*eagerly*). Oh, was Lily there?

BETTY (*not quite liking his enthusiasm. Peevishly*). Yes, she was there—and she insinuated that I was carrying on with Reynold.

THORNTON (*laughs*). Imagination! Ah! You've got a wonderful imagination. Lily's a nice little thing.

BETTY (*snaps*). Yes, of the feline species.

THORNTON. Gee, I believe you're jealous!

BETTY. It'll not be through any fault of hers if I'm not. She'll never forgive me for rescuing you from her.

THORNTON. Rescuing? That's great! (REYNOLD *heard whistling rag-time* OFF *stage*) That's Reynold now! (*Runs to* D. L. C., *opens it*) Hello, Rennie! (BETTY GOES *into kitchen*)

REYNOLD (*outside*). Hello there, Thorny! (THORNTON *returns to* R. C.)

ENTER REYNOLD D. L. C.

REYNOLD. Where is *la belle* Betty? (THORNTON *points to kitchen.* REYNOLD *runs over to door*) Ah! What a lovely domestic picture! (*Turns to* THORNTON *with mock gravity*) Curses on you!

THORNTON (*laughs*). If you'd entered here ten minutes ago and found no kettle boiling, no meat sizzling, no wife at home, you'd be thankful that you're not entrapped.

BETTY (*flounces out of kitchen.* REYNOLD *is* C., BETTY R. C.). Entrapped! I like that! Look here, Reynold Winburn, I want you to stop running around telling everybody that you came near drowning yourself when I married Thornton. (THORNTON *laughs*) You needn't laugh. It's no joke.

REYNOLD. Oh, but I did, until Thornton suggested a triangle.

BETTY. You little snip! (*Turns on* THORNTON) And as for you, you ought to be ashamed of yourself.

THORNTON. Think I want a wife that nobody else wants? (BETTY *flounces out into kitchen again. Throws down something.* THORNTON *laughs at sound, then slaps* REYNOLD *on the shoulder*) She takes you seriously.

REYNOLD. She's caught the big idea. You beat me to her, most masterful man, but I'm going to make her see yet what she has lost.

THORNTON (*laughs*). You're refreshing!

REYNOLD. And persistent. But everything fair and above board. No gum shoe methods for your uncle Rennie.

THORNTON. Keep it up, lad! You're amusing!

REYNOLD. Oh, I'll keep it up all ri', all ri'. Say, whom do you think I came near running over down the street?

THORNTON. Haven't the remotest idea.

REYNOLD. Your old flame, Lily, the firebrand. She looked as if she would like a lift, but I thought walking would do her good. She's on her way here with a torch alight to singe your household gods.

THORNTON. I can't see what you and Betty have against poor Lily. She's a charming girl.

REYNOLD. Yes; professional charmer. (*Bell rings*)

ENTER BETTY *from kitchen.*

BETTY. That's Aunt Jane now. Open the door, Reynold. You may as well do something to earn your board. (*Puts celery and other things on table.* REYNOLD *opens* D. L. C.)

ENTER LILY D. L. C.

LILY. Oh-h! (*Casting significant glance at* REYNOLD *and* BETTY) You here?

REYNOLD. Told you I would be, didn't I? (GOES R. *and helps* BETTY *arrange table*)

LILY. Did you? I forgot.

REYNOLD. Lily's forgettery is always working overtime.

LILY. Thought I'd run in a minute, Betty, and talk over the meeting. (*Glances at table*) But I see I'm too early. I thought you dined at six. I know Thornton has always been accustomed to an early dinner. It's nearly seven.

BETTY (*glancing at clock. Decidedly*). It is just ten minutes to six.

LILY. Indeed! My watch must be fast. (*Looks at wrist watch*)

REYNOLD. Better be careful, Lily. It's risky for a girl to have anything fast about her.

LILY (*to* BETTY). I suppose you had to stop and get some chops? Clubwomen always feed their families on chops and potato chips.

BETTY (*angrily*). I stopped to get some fruit.

LILY. I remember now, you are a raw food advocate.

THORNTON (*cordially*). You'll stay to dinner, of course. Our table seats just four.

LILY (*to* BETTY). If you insist.

BETTY. Oh, if you have any other engagement ——

LILY. But I haven't. It will be like old times. You and Reynold, and Thornton and I. (*Tosses hat on chair near sideboard*)

THORNTON. A quadrangle is more interesting than a triangle. (LILY *elevates her brows and looks pityingly at* THORNTON) Reynold, open some canned soup for Betty.

BETTY. Yes, do. (*Sarcastically*) I didn't anticipate a dinner party.

LILY. Poor Thornton, I hope you haven't come to canned soups.

BETTY (*aside to* REYNOLD). Cat!

LILY (*to* THORNTON). I know how you always doted on fresh things.

REYNOLD. Yes, Thornton has a weakness for the fresh. (*He gives* BETTY *a knowing glance as he nods toward* LILY) [EXIT REYNOLD *and* BETTY *into kitchen*

LILY (*approaching* THORNTON *seductively*). Well, Thornton, how are you anyway?

THORNTON. I *could* take a little nourishment.

LILY. It surprised me to see Betty going in for club work so soon.

THORNTON. You're not more surprised than I. Betty has been such a little home bird.

LILY. Yes; Betty has always used domesticity as a drawing card. It would be rather a good joke on you, Thornton, to find yourself hitched for life to a feminist.

THORNTON. I don't believe Betty is quite so bad as

that. She's a natural home builder. She made almost every stick of furniture in this room.

LILY. What? You're joking. How?

THORNTON. Out of old packing boxes. She spent the whole year before we were married making them at the night school.

LILY. Cl-e-ver girl!

THORNTON (*proudly*). Yes, very ingenious.

LILY. It would never have occurred to me to make out of the latest furniture fad a hook to catch a husband.

THORNTON (*impressed; letting her words sink in. Slowly*). Gee! I never thought of that.

LILY (*with meaning*). No—*you* wouldn't; you're so honest.

THORNTON (*angrily*). If I thought ——

LILY. Don't! Husbands were not made to think. Speaking of husbands you should have heard the way they were fried to a crisp by the "Wives' Welfare Club" this afternoon.

THORNTON. I'm surprised they permitted a bachelor maid.

LILY. They weren't exactly overjoyed, but I was determined the poor husbands should have some representation. You know all males were *verboten.*

THORNTON. Who were the bunch? Any one I know?

LILY. I should say so. Pat Duggan, the clothes horse; Ura Lamb, of angelic disposition and ——

THORNTON. Carrying a ton of adipose tissue.

LILY (*always laughs at* THORNTON'S *witticisms; that is one reason he likes her*). Shesha Nut, the court fool. The child nearly caused a riot. Then there was ——

THORNTON (*sniffing with disdain*). Huh! And of course they discussed the latest scientific method of populating the world, and all such claptrap!

LILY (*shaking her finger at him*). Naughty!

THORNTON (*exasperated*). The idea of Betty getting mixed up with a bunch of nuts like that! (*Drops into rocking-chair*)

LILY (*draws a chair close to him and sits*). I felt it

my duty to let you know. The name—"Wives' Welfare Club"—would lead a person to think it was some harmless society, but it is revolutionary.

THORNTON. Revolutionary?

LILY. Yes; they are sworn to overthrow the government of man.

THORNTON. Good Lord! They're anarchists!

LILY. Regular Bolshevists.

THORNTON. What did Betty think of all that nonsense?

LILY. I leave that to you.

THORNTON. She didn't tell me.

LILY (*knowingly*). But she showed the stand she takes by inviting her aunt to come here and stay. You know her aunt Jane was the one chosen to go on strike to make a test case.

THORNTON. And you say Betty sympathized with those women in their stupidity?

LILY. I don't wish to say anything against Betty, Thornton. Never shall it be said that I did anything to estrange man and wife.

THORNTON (*drops his hand on her hand that rests on the arm of his chair*). You're a good girl, Lily.

LILY (*snuggling*). Goodness counts for so little with you men.

THORNTON. Oh, yes, it does, in the long run.

LILY (*laying her other hand over his and looking at him sympathetically*). Oh, Thornton, I'm afraid you're not happy.

ENTER REYNOLD *from kitchen, wearing bungalow apron, sees familiar attitude of* THORNTON *and* LILY. *He coughs, but they are too absorbed in each other to notice.* BETTY *is about to come in from kitchen.* REYNOLD *jumps back and forth in door to prevent her seeing them. She can't understand his reason for such crazy actions; finally, losing patience, she gives him a push* L., *which causes him almost to lose his balance.* BETTY *stands a moment looking at*

THORNTON *and* LILY. *He is listening with much pleasure to* LILY, *who is exploiting her sex attraction to the limit.*

BETTY (*snaps out*). Dinner is ready! (LILY *keeps on talking with much animation to* THORNTON. *Both are oblivious of* BETTY'S *presence*)

REYNOLD. Oh boy!

BETTY (*turns to* REYNOLD). Get a megaphone. (*Auto horn heard* OFF *stage*) That's Aunt Jane now. (*Angrily to* THORNTON) Thornton, perhaps Lily could manage to exist alone long enough for you to open the door. (*Gets tray holding covered tureen of soup from kitchen, returns, sets tureen on table.* REYNOLD *takes the tray*)

THORNTON. I won't! (GOES *to extreme* R.)

LILY (*sweetly*). I will, dear. (*Opens* D. L. C. BOB SPINK *stands in door with broad grin on his face*)

BOB. Am I too late for dinner?

THORNTON (*relieved*). I should say not. Come right in, Uncle Bob.

ENTER BOB D. L. C.

BETTY. But where is auntie?

BOB. Sorry, but I can't give you the exact information. Cafeterias are her favorite sport. They're too swift for me.

LILY (*laughs*). Cafeterias swift? (*Remains* L. *of* BOB)

BOB (REYNOLD *stands next to* BOB, *listening and holding tray*). Here, young man, give me that tray and I'll show you what happened the last time I ate in one. (*Grabs tray and begins to whistle rag-time. He never gets a tune quite right.* REYNOLD *catches the idea and whistles it correctly, while* BOB *gives his whole attention to balancing the tray and stepping to the rag-time. He is very ludicrous and finally pretends to empty the contents of tray down* LILY'S *back. She screams and* GOES DOWN L. *Everybody laughs but* BOB) And the lady threatened to sue me if I didn't fork over for a brand

new dress. It didn't have more than two yards of goods in it, but it cost a cool hundred. No more jazz cafés for your uncle Bob.

BETTY. But we have been expecting Aunt Jane every minute.

BOB (*scared*). Here?

THORNTON. That's what I said, "Here!"

BOB. Oh, my dear, I don't think she had better see me—not until she's had her dinner anyway.

BETTY. But how about your dinner?

BOB. Just give me a snack in there. (*Points to* D. L.) I'm sure it will be safer.

BETTY. Poor Uncle Bob! (*Bell rings*)

BOB. That's her now. Don't let on I'm here. (EXITS *quickly* D. L. REYNOLD *opens* D. L. C. CLARA, *on seeing him, stops embarrassed. She carries a covered plate in her hand*)

CLARA. Oh, Mr. Winburn, I didn't know you were here.

REYNOLD. I'm jolly glad to see you. How do you think I look as a domestic animal? (*Flops apron*)

CLARA (*laughs*). Oh, so funny!

BETTY. Come in, Clara, and see what a handy man Reynold is about the house.

CLARA (*embarrassed*). Thanks, but I can't stay. I didn't know you had company. Mother made a cake this afternoon and sent over some.

ENTER CLARA D. L. C.

THORNTON. Your mother's cake is the best ever. Reynold and Lily are such old friends, we don't consider them company.

LILY (*with a significant smile at* BETTY). No, indeed. Reynold is just like a brother.

BETTY (*shoots an angry glance at* LILY, *then turns smiling on* CLARA). I'll have to hang you on the chandelier, Clara, but you're welcome.

REYNOLD. Yes, do stay.

BOB (*peeps in at* D. L.). Wasn't it her? (*Bell rings again. He jumps back into room, slamming door*) Good night!

BETTY (*opens* D. L. C.). It's only those bad boys who live down the street. They're always ringing people's bells. (*Closes door and* GOES *over to table*)

REYNOLD (*to* CLARA). Don't go. (*Nods toward bedroom*) Aren't you interested in seeing how the strike will end?

CLARA (*with a shy glance, hands plate to* REYNOLD). I'd like to stay, but mother is expecting me.

BETTY. Maybe you can come back later. (CLARA *looks up at* REYNOLD *inquiringly*)

REYNOLD (*to* CLARA). You didn't forget our engagement this evening, did you?

CLARA. No, but if you're busy, I don't mind not going.

THORNTON. Rennie told me he had asked you to go to the theater to-night. I thought he might as well have dinner with us.

REYNOLD. Will you be ready about eight?

CLARA. If you wish. Good-bye.

BETTY. Good-bye, Clara. Thanks for the cake.

CLARA. Oh, you're welcome. (*Withdraws, casting a last shy glance at* REYNOLD, *who nods pleasantly*)

[EXIT D. L. C.

BETTY. There isn't any use for us to wait any longer for Aunt Jane. The soup will be stone cold. You sit there, Lily. (*Points to front wing of table.* LILY GOES *to chair*) Thornton, you here. (*Touches left wing.* THORNTON *takes place beside it*) Don't be formal; sit down. (THORNTON *and* LILY *sit*) Reynold, I'm glad you are going to take Clara to the theater. (*Touches wing at back*) Aunt Jane here, (*Motions to right wing*) and you (*Nods to* REYNOLD) there.

REYNOLD (*not going to table*). Clara has a corking disposition, appreciates every little thing a fellow does.

LILY (*sarcastically*). Isn't it strange the girls who have the best dispositions remain single as a rule?

REYNOLD. Not throwing any bouquets at yourself, are you, Lily? (*To* BETTY) Where are you going to sit?

BETTY. There's only room for four, so I'll wait.

REYNOLD (*brings another chair*). I'll squeeze in here between Lily and Thornton. (*Sits at junction of two wings.* LILY *looks annoyed and moves her chair a bit to* R.)

BETTY. All right. (*Takes up another soup plate from sideboard*)

THORNTON (*crossly*). Silly making a crazy table like this!

BETTY. When we saw that one at the Exposition, you thought it the cutest idea.

THORNTON. Oh, the shape is all right, but there's not enough room.

BETTY. You wanted me to make it just big enough for two.

LILY. Did you, Thornton? (*Shakes her finger at him teasingly.* REYNOLD *almost bites it*) Oh, quit!

THORNTON (*ashamed*). Certainly not.

BETTY (*puts soup plate back on sideboard*). It is too crowded. You come over here, Reynold. (REYNOLD *protests*) Please don't argue. (REYNOLD *takes seat at* R. *wing*) Aunt Jane has probably changed her mind about coming. I'll sit here. (*Sits at back of table.* D. L. C. *opens.* JANE *stoops and takes up big hat-box that she has set down to open the door*)

ENTER JANE D. L. C., *stands red and perspiring, puffing and panting, holding the hat-box in one hand, the parrot cage in the other, and a stuffed carryall partially concealing the parrot.*

POLLY. Polly want a cracker! (*Everybody turns at sound*)

THORNTON (*mutters*). Good Lord!

BETTY (*starts toward* JANE). Oh, auntie, why didn't you get a boy to help you with your luggage?

JANE (*in voice of thunder*). I want no favor from any man! Is dinner ready?

BETTY. Yes; we had about given you up.

JANE. Thornton, take this parrot.

POLLY. To hell with the men! I'm on strike! (*Everybody but* THORNTON *and* JANE *laugh.* THORNTON *refuses to move*)

BETTY (*takes parrot*). I'll set it here until after dinner. (*Puts cage on small table* UP C. *The fern leaves partially conceal it.* REYNOLD *takes* JANE'S *hat-box and deposits it on chair near kitchen.* JANE *tosses her carryall on top of* THORNTON'S *hat, which is on divan* L., *smashing hat flat*)

THORNTON (*starts up angrily*). That's my hat!

JANE (*grandiloquently*). What's a hat at a time like this? (*Takes her own hat off hurriedly and tosses it on top of carryall.* THORNTON GOES *over and takes his hat from under carryall and tries to restore it to form, places it on rocker* L. *He is mad through and through.* JANE *drops in his seat at table*)

THORNTON (*turns and sees her in his place*). You're in my place. (GOES *to table*)

JANE. I'm down now and I'm not going to move.

BETTY. Here, take my place, Thornton.

THORNTON (GOES *to back of table, then turns to* BETTY). But where'll you sit?

BETTY. Oh, I'll serve.

JANE. Betty, stay where you are. You have had a strenuous afternoon. Thornton can eat off the mantel. (THORNTON *pouts and* BETTY *pushes him down into her seat*)

REYNOLD (*jumps up*). Say, let me serve. It'll be a lot of fun.

BETTY. No, stay where you are.

JANE (*tastes soup*). What delicious soup!

THORNTON (*glares*). Canned! (*Tastes it; makes wry face*) Dishwater! (*Pushes it from him*)

JANE (*severely*). Thornton, canned soups are made in places far more sanitary than the average kitchen. It is both nourishing and economical.

THORNTON. Economical? Then it has no place in our home.

JANE. The last time you were at our house you said you didn't see how Betty could make your wages stretch such a long way round. You're trying to change the subject, young man. (BOB *puts his head in door and listens*) But I'll have you know that I never saw the man yet that could switch me from my argument. (BOB *nods acquiescence*) Canned soups conserve the energy of wives who are forced to do their own cooking.

POLLY. I'm on strike! (*Everybody but* THORNTON *laughs*)

THORNTON. Shut up! (*Rises and strides over to rocking-chair*)

LILY (*sweetly*). I suppose I am old-fashioned, but the preparation of savory food for our loved ones seems to me a delightful privilege.

THORNTON (*beams across the room at her*). Such sentiments do you honor.

BETTY (*rises; bangs the soup plates together. To* LILY). You must have changed your mind since we went to college together. When I took up domestic science, you said you wouldn't cook a meal for the best man alive.

REYNOLD. Down one! (*Rises and follows* BETTY *to kitchen*) I'll bring the roast.

THORNTON. We've had the roast.

JANE. Do you mean me, young man?

POLLY. I'm on strike!

THORNTON (*twists the newspaper and throws it at the bird*). Shut up!

JANE (*to* THORNTON). Sit down! (THORNTON *sits on his hat. Feels it under him and rises furious. The others laugh.* THORNTON *returns to table and begins to eat the celery.* REYNOLD *comes from kitchen carrying a well-filled plate of food.* BETTY *carries platter with meat loaf and vegetables, which have previously been arranged ready to serve. She whispers to* REYNOLD *and nods toward* D. L. BOB *is peeking out, exhibiting great satisfaction at sight of food. As* REYNOLD *starts toward bedroom,* JANE *turns, looks up;* BOB *quickly withdraws.* JANE *to* REYNOLD) Where are you going?

REYNOLD (*at first tries to hide plate behind him, but at sight of* JANE'S *astonishment, he stutteringly explains*). I thought the parrot might be hungry.

JANE. But he can't eat all that.

REYNOLD (*laughs with embarrassment*). I thought I'd keep him company.

JANE (*returns to table, satisfied with explanation*). So considerate! What a lovely girl he would have made! (REYNOLD *doesn't like this, but it amuses* THORNTON)

REYNOLD (*quickly* GOES *over and shoves plate into outstretched hand of* BOB, *who closes door softly.* GOES *back to bird.* BETTY *has put platter in front of* THORNTON) Pretty Polly! (*Dodges into kitchen*)

POLLY. To hell with the men!

THORNTON (*thaws a bit at sight of food*). I'm surprised, Aunt Jane, at your keeping a profane bird.

JANE. You men relieve your feelings yourselves; we women have to relieve ours by proxy.

THORNTON (*to* LILY). May I offer you some (*Sarcastically*) hash? (LILY *passes plate*)

JANE. Betty, is that meat loaf made after my recipe?

BETTY. Yes, aunt.

JANE (*severely*). Thornton, you said that meat loaf was the best thing you ever tasted. Were those your pre-marriage manners? (THORNTON *serves himself and begins to eat*)

BETTY (*is shocked and motions him to serve* JANE, *but he stubbornly shakes his head*). Aunt Jane, help yourself. (JANE *does so*)

ENTER REYNOLD *from kitchen, carrying dish of corn bread.*

REYNOLD (*putting corn bread in front of* THORNTON). We nearly forgot the pièce de résistance, corn bread!

THORNTON (*takes up piece and weighs it in his hand*). Did you say, pound bread?

BETTY (*hurt*). Thornton, you seem to forget that I specialized in domestic science. This bread is as light

as a feather (BETTY GOES *into kitchen. They all eat in a different manner.* LILY *toys with her food fastidiously, as if the flavor was not quite to her liking;* REYNOLD *and* JANE *eat with great gusto; and* THORNTON *tries to keep from eating, but his appetite gets the better of him*)

REYNOLD. Thorny, if I had a wife that could make corn bread like this, I'd be so tame I'd eat out of her hand.

ENTER BETTY *from kitchen with pie, and takes it to sideboard.*

LILY (*glances from him to* BETTY, *then knowingly at* THORNTON. THORNTON'S *face is toward audience and it reflects each one of* LILY'S *expressions*). No doubt you would.

THORNTON (*throws down napkin annoyed*). You're getting too fresh around here!

REYNOLD. I told you I was going to be.

BETTY. Thornton, aren't you going to have some salad? You always say no meal is complete without salad. (*Takes bowl of salad from sideboard and puts it on table*)

THORNTON (*cynically*). You don't call this a meal, do you? A fine mixture for a person who pretends to be a dietitian!

BETTY. There is nothing about this meal that could possibly injure a healthy person. Certainly no one here looks much like an invalid.

THORNTON. Not now, but we soon will be if we have to live on this sort of grub.

JANE. Betty, is this the angel husband you flung in our faces all afternoon? If your uncle Bob grumbled about my cooking as he does about yours I'd ——

POLLY. I'm on strike!

THORNTON (*starts toward bird*). I'll strangle that devilish bird!

JANE (*grabbing his coat tail*). If you touch my par-

rot I'll have you arrested for assault and battery. (*Others rise*)

THORNTON (*yells*). You and your bird can go to ——

BETTY. Thornton!

JANE. Thornton Albright, you may bully your wife but you can't bully me!

THORNTON. If you think you're going to come here and break up my home, you're off your trolley!

JANE. Break up your home? Hum! Ha! If there is any home breaker around, it certainly isn't Aunt Jane. (*Glares at* LILY, *who tosses her head*)

THORNTON. And I'll let you know you can't insult my guests. You're not dealing with soft-hearted Uncle Bob this time, old lady. (GOES L.)

JANE (*taken aback*). Old lady! (*Then vehemently*) How dare you bring his name into this? If he were here he'd show you where to get off. (*With pride*) Bob Spink is a gentleman. (*Turns toward table*)

BOB (*has been peering out, listening. Chuckles to himself, comes out quickly and jerks open* D. L. C. *as if he had just entered*). Here! Here! What's all this row? I heard you way down the street. (*Takes* C.)

JANE (*stands a moment surprised*). Bob! Oh, Bob! Thank heaven! (*Throws herself into his arms. Breaks down*) I want to go home. I was never so insulted in all my life.

BOB (*holds her head tight against his breast, winks at* THORNTON, *but speaks with great fierceness*). Young man, I will see you again! (*With much solicitude*) Poor abused Jenny! Get your hat, dearie! (JANE *takes up hat from divan and jams it on her head askew.* BOB *puts his arm around her waist with mock concern and leads her to* D. L. C. *Turns to* THORNTON *again and winks. Roars*) Yes, again, soon!

POLLY. I'm on strike!

JANE. Oh, shut up! (EXITS *quickly* D. L. C. BOB *casts a mischievous glance backward to* THORNTON *as he follows her*)

BETTY (GOES C. *to* THORNTON). You've insulted her.

THORNTON. Do you take her part against me?

BETTY. She is older than we.

THORNTON (*to* LILY). Lily, I leave it to you. Do you think that old termagant had a right to perch herself on us?

BETTY. You are speaking of my aunt.

LILY. Please don't ask me, Thornton. Betty and I never saw with the same eyes.

BETTY. Oh, yes, we did, when I was half blind, but my vision is clearing.

LILY (*scenting a storm*). I really must be going. I forgot I have an invitation to a box party. (*Gets on her hat*)

BETTY. Reynold, run Lily over in your car.

LILY (*as she opens* D. L. C. *and steps outside*). That will be fine, Reynold. Good night, Thornton.

THORNTON. Good night, Lily. Come again.

LILY. Thanks, I will. Good night, Betty dear.

[EXIT D. L. C.

BETTY (*as* REYNOLD *makes gesture of protest*). Do as I tell you. (GOES *to* D. R.) I want to get a breath of air. [EXIT D. R.

REYNOLD (GOES DOWN *confidentially to* THORNTON). She's mad, Thorny. Never saw that look in her eye before. You've gone a bit too far this time. Better be careful.

THORNTON. I don't need any lessons from a whippersnapper like you. (CROSSES *to* R.)

REYNOLD (*seriously*). Thorny, old boy, you're both my—well—my world. Don't forget that. Don't!

THORNTON (*pats his shoulder*). I won't, boy. You're a good scout. [EXIT REYNOLD D. L. C.

ENTER BETTY D. R.

THORNTON (GOES *back to* L.). This is certainly the end of a perfect day. Dinner party broken up before dessert.

BETTY (*giving him a sharp look*). We'll have our dessert now.

THORNTON (*a bit afraid*). That's good! Pie?

BETTY (*with cutting sarcasm*). Do you think the crust will suit you?

THORNTON (*with great amiability*). Your crust always suits me. (GOES *to table*)

BETTY. Then I'll give you your pie. (*She takes pie from sideboard and cuts it*)

THORNTON. Aren't you going to have any? (*Sits back of table and eats pie*)

BETTY (*moves* L., *away from table*). No, I've had mine. Too much sweetness isn't healthful. (*Wanders about handling things without seeing them, settling in her mind her mode of action*)

THORNTON. For the Lord's sake, sit down! You give me the jimmies.

BETTY (*takes center and stands still*). I'm rather glad I went to that meeting to-day.

THORNTON. That's it! That infernal club started all this row. They're a bunch of nuts.

BETTY. You're quite right.

THORNTON (*rises and starts toward her*). There, that's my own girl talking.

BETTY (*waves him off*). Yes, to use your elegant term, they're nuts. They want to shift their responsibilities on somebody else's shoulders.

THORNTON (*with aggrieved air*). Yes, on mine. (*Drops in chair at* L. *wing of table*)

BETTY. But when it comes to my aunt ——

THORNTON (*rises*). That's it! Your aunt! She started all this trouble.

BETTY (*smiles*). And who else?

THORNTON (*feeling abused*). Your aunt ought to have enough sense to know I can't support her. The responsibility of a wife is enough for a young man's shoulders. (*Takes chair at front of table and turns it so he faces audience; sits*)

BETTY. Too much.

THORNTON (*lordly, as he stretches himself*). No-o; not when she conserves the resources.

BETTY (*looks at him a moment before speaking*). Strange—but during our courtship it never occurred to me to ask you about your ideas of the duty of a wife.

THORNTON (*laughing; rather importantly*). My ideas of the duties of a wife? (*Tips back in his chair*) Well, I'm clear on that point.

BETTY (*meaningly*). I'm sure you are.

THORNTON (*glad of chance to air his views*). First: A woman's place is in the home. (*He says this as if he had discovered the phrase*)

BETTY (*mildly*). All the time?

THORNTON. I don't get you.

BETTY. You believe whenever a man comes home he should find his wife—waiting?

THORNTON. You got it.

BETTY. But suppose she shouldn't be waiting—always?

THORNTON (*with self-confidence*). Oh, but if she loves him, she will be.

BETTY (*smiles*). Oh, I see! (*Sweetly, without raising her voice*) And in case she happened not to be waiting, her husband should—raise—a hell of a row?

THORNTON. Why, Betty!

BETTY. And the wife should cheerfully entertain all his friends and ancient *amourettes,* while he reserves the right to insult the ones that are dear to her?

THORNTON (*excusing himself*). Aunt Jane is not your friend, she's your aunt. (*He says this facetiously, trying to make her think it funny, but she remains inflexible, much to his discomfort*)

BETTY. Yes, she's my aunt. (*With feeling*) She is the person who took me in when I was left an orphan, and sent me through school. Do you know why I specialized in domestic science?

THORNTON. To be a good wife to some man, I suppose.

BETTY (*smiles*). What a masculine answer! But I didn't. It was because I wanted to be capable to earn my own living. That is why I chose a profession that is

always in demand. But we were discussing the duties of wifehood.

THORNTON (*rising*). Don't let us say anything more about it, dear. You agree with me, I know.

BETTY. And one of the wife's duties is to listen with lamblike docility to her husband's grumbling and growling?

THORNTON (*self-pityingly*). I don't see what's the use of being married if a fellow can't be natural in his own home. (*Puts his hands in pockets and strides over to* L. *corner*)

BETTY. And by being natural you mean the release of all self-restraint, the right to let loose all the badness in you? Why, Thornton Albright, you don't want mutual friendship, mutual love, mutual helpfulness! You want a bound slave who gives and gives and humbly accepts what her master's whims may offer. You're behind the times, dear man. The Emancipation Proclamation, freeing all slaves, was published by Abraham Lincoln January first, eighteen hundred and sixty-three.

THORNTON. I don't need any lesson in American history, nor have I any desire to be a slaveholder.

BETTY. No? Then if it's the present system of hiring servants that you advocate, you are still behind the times, for the workers to-day demand short hours, good pay, and fair treatment.

THORNTON. I want a wife, not a servant.

BETTY. Yes, you want a wife to boss. I regret that after one month's trial I cannot qualify, so I quit the job.

THORNTON. Oh, ho! That's rich! (CROSSES *to* R.) You've got the strike bug too. Why, my dear, you fell out of college into my arms. I've no desire to see my wife starve.

BETTY. If you think a scientifically trained housekeeper and dietitian is going to starve, you certainly don't read the want ads. I'll prove to you that I shall be more in demand in my new position than in the one I'm quitting.

THORNTON. Great Scott, Betty! You're not serious?

BETTY. Both serious and determined.

THORNTON (*disappointed*). Then you don't love me any more?

BETTY. Yes, I do; and I'll make you not only love but respect me as well.

THORNTON. Not respect you? Oh, come now, that's too much! (*Coming toward her*)

BETTY. In spite of all you say I've found out to-day that in your eyes a wife is an employee first of all, a person to attend to your wants. Very well, then if marriage is a business deal, I demand the same consideration that exists between boss and man.

THORNTON. What do you know about the relations of employer and employee?

BETTY. I know that the Strike is the modern weapon of protest, and I intend to use that weapon to get what I want.

THORNTON (*badly frightened*). Then you are going to give me up?

BETTY. No, but I'm going to walk out until you give up the tradition of man's superiority to woman.

THORNTON. That's no tradition; it's a fact.

BETTY. Very well. Prove that you are my superior in fighting the battle of life. [EXITS *hastily* D. L.

THORNTON (*looks after her astonished, then chuckles to himself. Takes a cigar out of his pocket, bites off the end, lights it; sits in rocker and prepares to enjoy himself. Looks quizzically toward door and calls*) Betty! (*No answer. Takes another puff or two*) Bet-t-y! (*Looks rather surprised. Rises and* GOES *to* D. L., *looks into room*) Oh, I say, come now, Betty, don't pack up. If anybody's got to go, let it be me. (*Throws away cigar.* BETTY *closes* D. L. THORNTON *shakes his head in a troubled manner. Puts on his hat and coat; takes some bank notes from his pocket, glances toward the closed door, then takes out notebook and writes.* GOES *to table and puts the money down with the note, looks for a weight to hold them down. Sets a salt shaker on them,*

then decides on the sugar bowl instead. While doing this his eyes take in the untouched food. He remembers he hasn't finished his dinner and is still hungry. He cuts the meat loaf. Calls) Where do you keep the wrapping paper? (*No answer. He takes the slice of meat loaf and a piece of pie and* EXITS *into kitchen*)

ENTER BETTY D. L., *wearing coat, hat, and carrying a hand-bag. She notices that* THORNTON'S *coat and hat are gone. As she glances toward table observes the note and money. She sets her bag down near* D. L. C., GOES *to table, picks up money and note, reads note and tosses the money indifferently on to the table, then her eyes fall on the meat loaf. She remembers she hasn't had any dinner. Picks up a slice of meat and a piece of pie, saunters away from table over toward fireplace. Just as she is taking a bite of pie* THORNTON *comes to kitchen door, eating the pie with one hand and holding the package of meat loaf in other hand.* BETTY *turns at the sound. They gaze at each other astonished, each with the pie in mouth.* THORNTON *drops the food and bolts out of* D. R.; BETTY *also drops food and rushes for* D. L. C., *grabbing hand-bag, makes a hasty* EXIT.

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE.—*Reception-room in* BETTY'S *Diet Kitchen. About* 6.30 P. M. *Six weeks later.* UP R. *a window faces the street, on which is painted in bold letters* "Betty's Diet Kitchen," *the reverse side of the letters showing. Farther* DOWN R. *is a door leading to street. Another door at* L. *leads into the private dining-room. French doors* UP C.; *when open the main dining-room is plainly seen. At* L. *of* C. D. *is a desk with chair, on which are stacked menus of different colors.* L. *of desk is an arm-chair. To* R. *of* C. D. *a settee is placed across corner of room. Table with Boston fern in front of window.* DOWN R. *is another arm-chair.* DOWN L. *is a tête-à-tête. Wicker furniture with bright pillows and cushions, as desired. All the woodwork is of light color, and a pleasing color scheme gives a sense of harmony.*

NOTE.—*In order to make the play more effective the scenery can be arranged as follows: By omitting a very few lines of the text and some of the stage business the play can be easily performed without the following: When* C. D. *opens, people in the rear dining-room can be seen sitting at tables, eating and talking together; pretty girls and handsome young men attend to their wants. The waiters and waitresses wear simple but attractive costumes, not alike, and appear more like hosts and hostesses than paid waiters. When the patrons finish their dinner they move away, and the waiters prepare the tables for others.* D. L. *leading to the private dining-room is always open, but greenery conceals tables and orchestra. Before the curtain rises, music of soothing, nerve-resting kind can be faintly heard. This continues with some intermissions through the entire act, except when a patron asks for jazz music.*

DISCOVERED, BETTY *talking to* CLARA, *who is busy arranging the menu cards.*

CLARA. But, Betty, some of the patrons don't want to take the health menus you prescribe.

BETTY. If these people place themselves under my care to be cured, they must follow my orders. If they don't want to do so, there are plenty of other restaurants where they can mix any death-dealing combination of food, and where they can stuff themselves until they haven't energy enough to either move or think.

CLARA. It is because the food is so good that it is hard for them to diet.

BETTY. A lot of them come for curiosity, just to see if Thornton and I will make up.

CLARA. They do gossip considerably, but I wouldn't mind if I were you.

BETTY. I suppose it does look queer for Thornton to eat here all the time, when we are not living together. But what could I do? This is a public restaurant.

CLARA (*looks observantly at* BETTY). Mr. Albright says it is the best in the city.

BETTY (*tosses her head*). How gracious of him!

CLARA (*glancing out of window*). There come Mrs. Lamb and her husband.

BETTY (*also glancing out*). Oh, the lion and the lamb.

CLARA (*innocently*). He doesn't act a bit like I thought a cave man would act.

BETTY (*smiling*). No? Well, you see, honey, a public restaurant isn't exactly the place for a barbarian to show off to advantage.

CLARA. Then you really think he is so bad?

BETTY (*seriously*). One can never tell. Better be careful not to arouse him.

ENTER URA LAMB D. R.

URA (*in doorway, to her husband, who stops outside, his face almost against window, staring at* BETTY'S *sign*). Come on in. What are you staring at, Jim?

ENTER JIM LAMB D. R.

JIM. I was only trying to decipher some cryptic significance in Mrs. Albright's semiography, my dear. The words "Betty's Diet Kitchen" are epigraphic, I quite understand, but there must be some hidden ——

URA. Gracious me! That man can't even read a simple sign without trying to find out some hidden meaning. (JIM *has walked over to window and is still gazing at reverse side of sign*) Come away from there! (*Angrily drags him from window, but he keeps looking back, wrinkling his brow and talking to himself, as if deciphering some hieroglyph.* BETTY *advances, shakes hands with* URA, CROSSES *and extends her hand to* JIM, *who doesn't see it, so absorbed is he.* URA *shouts*) Jim! (*He jumps, looks about frightened, sees* BETTY'S *outstretched hand, lets his drop into it, but with no warmth of response, and goes on thinking out his problem*) Betty, I want to talk to you a minute before the rush arrives. Jim! (*He is again buried in thought*) Jim! (*He takes out pencil and pad and begins to write.* URA *grabs hold of his arm and he arouses with a start. She drags him* C. *and gives him a push toward desk, where* CLARA *stands waiting*) Get the menus and go in and order the dinner. Do you remember the numbers?

JIM (*dazed*). Numbers?

URA. Yes. (*Decidedly*) Numbers two and ten.

JIM. Oh, yes, two—mind stimulation. Two, stimulation; two, mind.

URA (*to* BETTY). What did you give him a fish diet for? He has so much mind now that he hasn't an ounce of common sense.

JIM. There is some connection between the words and the numbers. She intends to convey the idea that ——

URA (*provoked*). Convey nothing! Get numbers two and ten, and don't stop to think until you are seated at the table and have given the cards to the waiter.

JIM. I'll try, my dear, to follow your instructions. (GOES *toward* CLARA, *but can not resist jotting down something else in his book.* URA *talks to* BETTY. *He*

is about to pass CLARA *when she touches his arm respectfully. He looks up inquiringly*)

CLARA. Your cards, sir.

JIM. Oh, ye-es. Number six and number thirteen, please.

CLARA. Two and ten, you mean, sir. (*Smiles sweetly and hands him two cards. He takes them, much embarrassed, and again begins to think of the cryptic sign; walks into the wall. Sees his mistake and makes a dash for the dining-room*) [EXIT D. C.

URA (*continuing in audible tone*). Yes, I should say we did have a terrible time to make your Aunt Jane see that it is her duty to the "Wives' Welfare Club" to resume the strike. She wouldn't give in though until we promised her a suite at the Alexandria. Goodness knows how the money will be raised to pay for it unless we go through our husbands' pockets when they're asleep.

BETTY (*laughs*). That'll not be an entirely new experiment, will it?

URA. I don't need to wait until Jim's asleep to go through his. He has been burrowing in his musty books so long that he never knows what's going on outside of them.

BETTY. But don't you think I am making a good enough test case without your keeping Aunt Jane out on strike?

URA. Yes, you're the one that's really bringing our husbands to time. Jim wouldn't like me to follow your example. He'd never be able to get out his fresh underwear when he wanted a bath. We've lived in that house ten years and he doesn't know where his clothes are kept. But you see, my dear, the more women we can keep on strike, the better it is for us who don't strike.

BETTY. But is that altogether fair to the strikers?

URA. Fair? Who ever heard of fairness in a strike? If Jane had never gone out it would be different, but to back down! No, she has got to stay out until we get our demands. You'll contribute, of course?

BETTY. Oh, yes, I'll see that Aunt Jane doesn't come to want.

URA. You're a trump!

[EXIT *quickly* D. C. BETTY *saunters up to* CLARA.

ENTER JANE *and* BOB SPINK D. R., *arm in arm.*

BOB. Got a table for us, Betty?

BETTY (*turns*). Why, how's this?

BOB. I forgave her again and took her back.

JANE. Don't you believe it. He promised to reform. (GOES C., BETTY L. *of her*)

BETTY (*with a merry twinkle*). Did you, Uncle Bob?

BOB. Yep. Promised to be as angelic (*Winking at* BETTY) as Jane herself.

BETTY. But, auntie, what will the "Wives' Welfare Club"——

JANE. The "Wives' Welfare Club" can be their own goat.

BOB. Betty, how long are you going to keep up this separation from Thornton? Six weeks' punishment is enough for any man. His heart is broken.

BETTY (*sniffs*). His appetite is good. Clara told me he stole three menus yesterday when her back was turned. He will demoralize my establishment. Who is going to be satisfied with a raw carrot and a glass of milk when an ostrich like that is feeding under his very eyes?

JANE. Betty, I used to ridicule your idea that most human ills are traceable to improper eating, but since your Uncle Bob has been following your advice he has become almost as saintly as before we were married.

BOB. And I've noticed a decided improvement in your Aunt Jane's disposition since you took the problem of cook off her mind.

JANE. My disposition requires no improvement. But, Betty, haven't you a course of diet that will remove wrinkles?

BETTY. Happiness is the only wrinkle eraser, auntie, and now since you have Uncle Bob back to——

JANE (*laughs*). Jaw?

BETTY. No; love. Your face is as smooth as a girl's.

BOB. Shall I take the rheumatism bill of fare again, Betty?

BETTY. Yes; number eight for my uncle and four for my aunt, Clara. (BOB *goes to desk.* CLARA *gives him bill of fare. Brings another to* JANE)

JANE. What will it do for me?

BETTY. Make you resume your dancing days.

JANE. O Betty, your diet kitchen is a Godsend. No more cooks, thank heaven!

BETTY. I'll show you your seats.

[EXIT D. L., *followed by* BOB *and* JANE

ENTER REYNOLD D. R., CLARA *sees him and becomes self-conscious.*

REYNOLD. How-dy-do, Clara? (*Hesitates, embarrassed*) Nice day. (*Laughs*) Isn't that stupid of me? How many times have you been told about the weather to-day?

CLARA (*laughs*). A good many times, but I don't mind.

REYNOLD. Oh, you're so good-natured you don't mind anything.

CLARA. You only think that.

REYNOLD. You must get pretty tired, don't you? It's hard work being on your feet all day. (REYNOLD *is making conversation and is not quite natural*)

CLARA. Oh, a little, but Betty is so nice to work for.

REYNOLD. She sure has made a go of this place. The lame, the halt, and the blind come in and walk out cured.

CLARA. Not quite so miraculous as that, but their health does improve remarkably when they live up to Betty's directions. She is wonderful, and so kind and gentle.

REYNOLD (*glancing admiringly at* CLARA). I know somebody else who is kind and gentle too.

CLARA (*laughs self-consciously. Glances toward win-*

dow). Here come Patricia Duggan and her poor husband.

REYNOLD. Tom Duggan poor? He makes scads of money.

CLARA. But he looks all worn out. I feel so sorry for him.

REYNOLD. What a sympathetic little pigeon you are! (*Starts to take her hand, but she draws back embarrassed*)

ENTER MR. *and* MRS. DUGGAN D. R.

REYNOLD (*going over to* PAT.). How are you, Mrs. Duggan?

PAT. Oh, *comme-çi comme-ça.*

REYNOLD. What's that in United States?

PAT. You tease! (*They talk and jest together*)

TOM (*approaching desk, to* CLARA). Please give me the same bill of fare I had yesterday. It made me feel like a colt. What do you call it?

CLARA (*glances toward* PAT. *to see that she is not listening*). Mrs. Albright has named it "Overburdened husbands' menu." (TOM *laughs*) Did you follow the directions about relaxation and amusement? Mrs. Albright says there is nothing the matter with your stomach, but you need plenty of rest. To get the best results it is necessary to follow all her orders.

TOM (*glances toward* PAT., *sighs*). I find there is nothing like a set of marabou for bringing repose. (CLARA *looks inquiringly,* TOM *laughs, starts toward tête-à-tête*)

ENTER BETTY D. L., *extends her hand to* TOM *and passes on to greet* PAT. TOM *sits on tête-à-tête.*

BETTY. How are you, good folk? How are you, Reynold?

REYNOLD (*mournfully*). Hungry. (BETTY *laughs*) Here, Tom, let me see your bill of fare. I believe Betty is holding out on me.

TOM (*to* REYNOLD). Don't you suppose we could

have something with a bit more pep in it than that funeral march?

REYNOLD. Sure. Betty permits the orchestra to play anything the customers want, but she has them stick to the high-brow stuff whenever possible.

TOM. Jazz for mine.

REYNOLD. I'll shut 'em off. (EXITS D. L., RE-ENTERS *immediately and sits by* TOM. *The orchestra starts some jazz music*)

PAT. (*on other side of room, to* BETTY). Your going on strike has brought our husbands around quicker than we anticipated. See this lovely set of marabou? Tom bought it for me just as soon as he learned what a success you are making of this diet kitchen. He says he hasn't slept so well for a month as he did last night.

BETTY. Maybe you gave him a chance.

PAT. I did. I went to the opera and left him at home alone. I was the envy of every woman there. I'm glad I had sense enough not to go on strike. It would have been foolish for us women to walk out without something to live on, wouldn't it?

BETTY (*dryly*). Rather. I saw that at once.

PAT. You don't ever have to go back if Thornton doesn't do as you want.

BETTY (*with a longing look*). No, I don't ever have to go back. (*Sighs*) I have my economic independence.

PAT. I don't know what that means, but you certainly are making heaps of money. But, Betty, I thought your marriage was a bed of roses.

BETTY. It was—the prickly kind.

PAT. I'll wager I know the sharpest thorn. However, if Lily is the only cause, I wouldn't give her the satisfaction. Did you know that she has invited herself to the Nuts? Shesha is furious. She says Lady Lily keeps the telephone wires hot calling up Thornton.

BETTY. If he prefers her, he is certainly welcome to his choice.

PAT. It doesn't look that way. He hasn't been in

their house since she moved in, and you know what chums he and John Nut are.

BETTY. Yes, he used to spend half his time there.

PAT. Betty, you're doing worlds for us wives. There's a peacherino of a moleskin coat that I'm trying to get Tom to buy for me, but I'd let it go rather than wreck your happiness. Don't forget that no man can hold out forever from the tiger-Lily brand.

BETTY (*shrugs her shoulders*). Do you think you'll get your moleskin?

PAT. (*sighs*). I don't know. But I told Tom if he didn't buy it I'd start a bowling alley.

BETTY (*laughs*). You'll need a bowling something if you don't look out for your health. Here, let me feel your pulse. (PAT. *extends arm*) I thought so, circulation like a muddy pond. Cut out limousines and take hikes.

PAT. Don't make me move more than I do now. Isn't there something I can eat that will bring the same result?

BETTY. Card number three will help some.

PAT. Oh, you darling! (*Embraces* BETTY, *then* GOES to CLARA) Card number three, please. (CLARA *gives her card.* PAT. *reads*) "One raw egg beaten in lemon juice." (*Hands it back haughtily*) You've made a mistake. Card number three, my dear.

CLARA. That is card number three.

PAT. (*glances toward* BETTY). Heartless! (BETTY *laughs*) Tom, let me see your menu. (*Grabs card out of his hand and reads aloud*) "Choice of *hors-d'œuvres* soup, fish, entrée, roast, salad, pie, pudding, ice-cream, nuts, cheese"—oh, heavens! All the things I adore! (REYNOLD *laughs and joins* BETTY)

TOM. Better take her advice, Patricia. She's made me feel like a fighting cock already.

PAT. Tom (*Earnestly*), Betty says I am an exceedingly sick woman. My blood doesn't circulate at all. I think that moleskin coat I saw at the Ville would accelerate the red corpuscles.

TOM (*makes a rush for* C. D.). Great Scott! You'll make me lose my appetite.

PAT. (*grabs hold of him*). But, Tom, just one minute!

TOM (*trying to release himself*). No, I've a very important engagement.

PAT. (*severely*). Tom Duggan, if you don't buy me that moleskin coat I'll start a jazz hall directly across from your office.

TOM (*alarmed*). Ye gods!

PAT. How would Mrs. Thomas Duggan look teaching the shimmy? (*She begins to dance, catches hold of* REYNOLD *before he knows what she's about.* TOM *looks on horrified at her audacious movements*)

TOM. Oh, my appetite! It's going!

PAT. (*drops her menu as she whirls toward him, pushes her face mischievously up into his*). Do I get the moleskin?

TOM. Anything, only don't spoil a good dinner. (*Rushes out* D. C.)

PAT. (*triumphantly glances over her shoulder at* BETTY). I got him! [EXITS *after* TOM D. C., *laughing*

BETTY (*looks after her*). What a lovely wax model Pat would make for a show window! (*Notices menu on floor*) Run after her, Clara, she dropped her menu. And stop that jazz music. How can anybody chew his food slowly with that kind of an accompaniment? (CLARA *picks up the menu and* EXITS D. C. *The music stops for a while*)

BETTY (*to* REYNOLD *as she looks after* CLARA). What a lovely girl Clara is!

REYNOLD. Yes, she is such a comfortable little body. She's the kind of girl that makes a fellow have confidence in himself. When I see you two working here, I feel ashamed to be lazing around.

BETTY. Then why don't you settle down and get married? Now Clara is ——

REYNOLD (*seriously*). You see, Betty, I'm not altogether certain that I ——

BETTY. But you are. Any one can see that.

REYNOLD (*meditatively*). She sure is a fine girl.

BETTY. Then why don't you ——

REYNOLD. Well, you see —

BETTY. Look here, Reynold Winburn, you are always telling me that you would do anything for me, yet when I pick out the very nicest girl I know for you, you hem and haw and hesitate.

REYNOLD. Clara is so genuine, I wouldn't like to be unfair to her. You see, Betty, I'm not quite sure that I have got over ——

BETTY. Oh, well, if you don't want to please me in a little thing like that —— (*Shrugs her shoulders*)

REYNOLD. And you can talk of marriage as a little thing after your experience!

BETTY. Little! (*Laughs without enjoyment*) Ha! Ha! It is less than little. It is nothing at all to Thor—to me.

REYNOLD (*solemnly*). Betty, Thornton is very ill.

BETTY (*frightened*). Ill? Oh, where is he? (*Starts as if to go to him.* REYNOLD *smiles. Recovers herself*) Oh, you bad boy! I knew he would be. He stole three farm laborers' bills of fare, and ate two lobsters and a whole mince pie.

REYNOLD. Take him back, won't you?

BETTY (*gives him a push*). Oh, you! A nice third part of a triangle you make, asking me to take my husband back!

REYNOLD. And a nice third part of a triangle you are, asking me to marry somebody else!

BETTY. Don't be silly! I have no intention of taking him back.

REYNOLD. He told me he had begged your pardon for being such a grouch, with every pleading word he could find in the dictionary.

BETTY. But he hasn't admitted woman's equality to man (*With quivering chin and mouth as she wipes away a tear*), and I don't believe he ever will.

REYNOLD. Don't be picayunish. You said you were only going on strike until he toed the mark.

BETTY (*recovering her poise*). I've changed my mind. I now see it would take a regiment of cooks to fill him up.

REYNOLD. Then if you won't take him back, maybe you'll get a divorce and marry me?

BETTY. This is a diet kitchen, not a marriage bureau.

REYNOLD. Oh, I thought it was. You are so anxious for me to marry ——

BETTY. Shh! (CLARA ENTERS D. L.) Clara, give Mr. Winburn the infants' bill of fare.

REYNOLD (CLARA *offers him a baby blue card. He reads*). Dining-room number three, in front of cow barn. One pail of warm milk, fresh from the cow. Oh, pickles! [EXIT D. L.

BETTY (*sees* LILY *coming. To* CLARA). That creature here again! I wish I had prepared a carbolic acid menu. I don't want to see her. (*Starts* UP C.)

CLARA. What card shall I give her?

BETTY. Indigestion bill of fare. If she eats everything on that, she'll have to be carried out on a stretcher. [EXIT D. L.

ENTER LILY D. R., *looks around.*

LILY. Betty not here?

CLARA. She was called away.

ENTER REYNOLD D. L., GOES *to* CLARA *and whispers something to her.*

[EXIT CLARA D. L.

REYNOLD (*with a determined air, makes for* LILY). Lily, I want a serious talk with you.

LILY. Serious! (*Bows*) Why am I so favored?

REYNOLD. Don't try to attitudinize before me. Betty and Thornton are my friends.

LILY (*insinuatingly*). It is plainly apparent that Betty is your (*Smiles*) friend.

REYNOLD. Cut that! I said friends. I reckon a fellow can be fond of a woman without ceasing to be either her friend or her husband's.

LILY. It's not usual.

REYNOLD (*conciliatory*). Don't let's quarrel, Lily. You don't realize it, but you're butting in at the wrong time now. One of these fine days Thornton, in a fit of despondency, will do something he'll always regret if

there's a pretty girl around willing to play the game with him. Betty's true blue.

LILY. True blue and quit him?

REYNOLD. Oh, you know she didn't quit him for keeps. She just wants to make him throw away his old-fashioned notions of a woman's place in the home.

LILY (*smiles*). Do you think there is any chance of Thornton ever giving up any of his cherished opinions?

REYNOLD. I dunno, he sure does like to boss.

LILY. I prefer the dominant male myself.

REYNOLD. You? Hum! I've a pipe dream of your catering to any man's whims.

LILY. If a woman uses the right tactics, she can turn the catering the other way round. There's no sense in open antagonism.

REYNOLD (*sneering*). Wheedling, I suppose?

LILY. It's the method you men have forced on us. We must match our wits against your strength. (*Looks at* REYNOLD *schemingly and speaks with deliberation*) But—what—do you think might happen if Thornton in a moment of despondency should turn for consolation to some one else?

REYNOLD (*not suspecting her motive, answers frankly*). Betty'd never stand for it, never! I know her well enough for that. She'd divorce him. (REYNOLD *is too much occupied with his thoughts to notice* LILY'S *satisfaction*) And that would be the end of it so far as Betty's concerned.

LILY. I should think that would just suit *you.*

REYNOLD. It would suit me down to the ground, but I don't believe it would suit Betty, and her happiness is the main thing. (*Cajoling*) Now, be a good girl and don't complicate matters. [EXIT D. L.

ENTER CLARA D. L. LILY *has approached desk and is glancing over cards.*

CLARA. This is your menu, Miss de Longpré.

LILY (*takes card*). How can you remember the right ones for the right people?

CLARA. Part of Mrs. Albright's success is due to the personal attention given every one.

LILY. Then she really is successful? I fancied it was all a big bluff.

CLARA. No, indeed. She is making money faster than a Wall Street broker. You see the idea is unique to give people the exact amount and the right kind of food that their particular case requires. Usually dietitians act as if the human race had but one stomach. I believe that everybody in this town that is mentally or physically ill comes to us. (*Laughs and* GOES *to window*) That is, everybody but the lawyers. They say they are going to boycott the place, their divorce cases have been falling off so much since this diet kitchen started. You know Mrs. Albright specializes on bad disposition.

LILY (*laughs*). Might as well try to change the Milky Way.

CLARA. There comes Mr. Albright now.

ENTER THORNTON D. R., *stands in door a moment looking around.*

LILY (*pretends not to know he is there, speaks so he can hear*). I should think Mr. Albright would be very proud to have a hash slinger for a wife. (*Turns and pretends to see him for the first time. Runs to him*) Oh, Thornton, forgive me! My indignation got the best of my unruly old tongue.

THORNTON (*to* CLARA). Will you please tell Betty I wish to see her?

CLARA. Certainly. [EXIT D. L.

THORNTON (*to* LILY). Yes, I'm the laughing stock of the whole town. The fellows are all kidding—I won't have it! Damn it! Something has got to be done!

LILY. I don't suppose you would care to take any advice from an old friend. I've wanted so much to help you, but you have constantly avoided me.

THORNTON. No, not that; but I haven't been in the

humor to see anybody. I love my wife. You know that, don't you?

LILY (*sighs*). Oh, yes, I know. Would she were worthy of so great a love!

THORNTON. I have told her over and over again that I behaved like a senseless ass that day, but she insists that my actions were but the demonstration of traditional opinions that most men possess, and until I change my opinions there is no certainty that I'll not have similar tantrums. Now I ask you, as friend to friend, do you think I should give up all my ideas about woman just because I'm married?

LILY. Certainly not, especially when your ideas are the right ones.

THORNTON (*eagerly but not quite sure of himself*). You really think they are?

LILY. Don't you?

THORNTON (*hesitatingly*). Oh, ye-s, yes. (*Braces himself*) And this ridiculous notion of a wife's economic independence—why, a fellow would never dare say a word.

LILY (*smiles to herself, but he doesn't see it*). It certainly places a woman in a position where she can be easily compromised. Every old roué in town patronizes this café. You don't suppose they come for unbaked bread and cereal coffee, do you?

THORNTON (*flops in chair*). Good Lord, I never thought of that!

LILY. There is some safety in numbers, but how about Reynold?

THORNTON. Oh, Reynold is innocuous. He's trying his best to make it up between us.

LILY. And you believe that?

THORNTON. Don't you? (LILY *shrugs her shoulders*) Oh, I don't know where I'm at.

LILY. Your men friends are kidding you because your wife is running an eating house, but your women friends are wondering at your credulity. Reynold and Betty ——

THORNTON. You're wrong there. It is only puppy love Rennie has for Betty. Why, he and Clara are ——

LILY (*laughs*). He and Clara? Really, Thornton, I thought you had more discernment.

THORNTON (*seriously*). Lily, I know you mean well, but you're going too far. I wouldn't believe anything against Betty unless I saw it with my own eyes.

LILY. If you keep your eyes open you will see a plenty. I should have thought your wife would have had enough consideration for the name she bears to take up a refined occupation at least. "Betty's Diet Kitchen!" (*Laughs*)

THORNTON. But we have to hand it to her for making a go of it. Original little devil!

LILY (*coldly*). Oh, if you're satisfied there is nothing more to be said.

THORNTON. Satisfied? I'm humiliated down to the ground. Hang it! She's made a bigger success in her business than I have of mine.

LILY. I'll help to win her back if you'll let me. You know it takes a woman to know a woman.

THORNTON. If you only would, I'd be your debtor for life.

LILY (*sweetly*). To have forwarded your happiness, Thornton, is quite enough payment for me.

THORNTON. Noble girl! What is your plan?

LILY. You must make her furiously jealous. That's the way to bring her to reason. When she thinks she is about to lose you, she'll move heaven and earth to get you back.

THORNTON. And would you really be willing to do this for me? You know coming between husband and wife is no sinecure.

LILY. I'd do anything to see that old care-free look on your face again. You know Betty has always been a wee bit jealous of me anyway.

THORNTON. I believe you're right. She accused me the day she left of showing you too much attention. I didn't think much about it then, it was so absurd.

(LILY *doesn't quite like this last remark*) How can we arrange it? Something that will bring quick results.

LILY. You pretend that you realize at last that she was never the wife for you.

THORNTON. Good! And you?

LILY. Don't bother about me. I'll follow your lead. What do you say to a flirtatious dinner in the open café as a starter?

THORNTON. Excellent!

ENTER CLARA D. L.

CLARA. Mr. Albright, Mrs. Albright said ——

THORNTON (*loftily*). Oh, never mind! Give me the bill of fare that has the most on it and takes the longest time to eat.

CLARA. But Mrs. Albright told me I was to give you an abstemious bill of fare.

THORNTON (*grabs up bunch of cards*). You can tell Madam Betty for me that I do not come to this café for her advice, but for the cookery. (CLARA *stares in astonishment.* THORNTON *nods to* LILY *laughingly*) Guess that'll hold her for a while.

LILY (*showing satisfaction*). It will certainly set independent Betty down a peg or two.

THORNTON (*scared*). But—eh—you don't suppose it's likely to set her against me more than ever, do you?

LILY (*forcefully*). Impossible! It will simply make her see that you mean business. (LILY *and* THORNTON EXEUNT D. C. CLARA *closes the door after them, returns to desk, picks up several stacks of menus*)

ENTER REYNOLD D. L. *Musicians play Chopin.*

CLARA (*forgetting her timidity, runs to* REYNOLD. *She still unconsciously holds the cards*). O Reynold, that dreadful Lily is going to have dinner with Thornton. Betty will not like it a bit. Oh, I wish I knew

what to do. Can't you prevent them before Betty sees them?

REYNOLD. How can I if they have already gone in? Probably she has seen them by now.

CLARA. No, Betty is in the private dining-room.

REYNOLD. I can't very well force them apart.

CLARA. Do try to do something. I can't bear to see Betty feel bad. Betty pretends that she doesn't care, but she does. I have caught her crying to herself several times lately.

REYNOLD. Poor Betty! (*Starts toward* C.) I'll shoot that Thornton.

CLARA (*catches hold of him*). Oh, Betty wouldn't like that at all.

REYNOLD (*submitting*). No, I suppose not.

CLARA (*still unconsciously holding the menus in one hand while she holds* REYNOLD *with the other*). O Reynold, you are such a big, strong man, do think of something. (REYNOLD *puffs out proudly*) I do so want her to be happy.

REYNOLD. So do I. (*His face suddenly lightens*) Clara, will you marry me?

CLARA (*drops the menus and starts back amazed*). Oh, gracious! (*Both on their knees picking up the cards, which have fluttered in every direction*) Whatever made you think of such a thing?

REYNOLD. Oh, I've been thinking about it for ever so long. Will you?

CLARA (*they have crawled closer together, still picking up the cards*). I don't know what I ought to say.

REYNOLD (*getting hold of her hand as they both reach for the same card*). Don't you like me enough? (*They rise together, he still holding her hand*)

CLARA. Oh, it isn't that—but—I'll see what Betty says.

REYNOLD. I know what she will say. Here's Betty now.

CLARA (*moving shyly away from* REYNOLD). She looks serene. I don't believe she has seen them.

REYNOLD. We'll keep her here until they get through dinner.

ENTER BETTY D. L.

REYNOLD. Say, Betty, Clara wants your advice.

BETTY (*smiles on* CLARA). Nothing so easy to give and nothing so hard to take, dear girl. (CLARA *is assorting the various menus and putting the colors together*) What happened to the menus? (CLARA *is at desk,* BETTY *is to her* L. *and* REYNOLD *is* DOWN R.)

ENTER SHESHA D. C., *throws one door open,* CLARA *closes it.*

SHESHA. Betty! Betty! (GOES C.) She has copped him at last. (REYNOLD *and* CLARA *try to stop her, but it is useless. Music changes to rag-time*)

BETTY. What are you talking about? (GOES L. *of* SHESHA)

SHESHA. Lily and Thornton. They are making a show of themselves in the public dining-room. My dear, no decent woman stands a chance against that brand.

BETTY (*angrily*). You mean they are dining together in my restaurant?

SHESHA. Not only dining, but holding hands. That is, they were until I sent John over to sit between them.

BETTY (*starts* C.). I'll put them out! (*Stops and turns back*) I don't want you to suppose that I care two figs what they do, but I'll have them know this is a respectable place.

SHESHA. Something must be done.

BETTY. And I'm the one who will do it. Lily can feed him from now on. That will be enough punishment for him. (*Starts* UP C. *again*)

ENTER URA D. C. *throwing both doors wide open, revealing* THORNTON *and* LILY *sitting at table. He holds one of* LILY'S *hands and* JOHN NUT *holds the other one. They are having a hilarious time. When* BETTY *sees them she hesitates.*

URA. Shesha, come quick! (URA GOES C., SHESHA *to her* R., REYNOLD R. *of them.* CLARA UP *by desk.* BETTY UP *by* C. D., *undecided what to do*)

SHESHA. Why?

URA. Look!

SHESHA. My John is holding her hand too! Oh, Lordy, I'm lost! He's so good-natured he'll be paying her board next.

URA. The whole "Wives' Welfare Club" and their husbands are in there. (JIM LAMB *comes over to table,* LILY *draws her hand away from* THORNTON *and extends it to* JIM)

SHESHA. Look, Ura!

URA (*turns and sees her husband smiling a silly smile as* LILY *draws him forward*). What next? My lamb in the spider's net! (*Turns on* BETTY) You got us into this; now you've got to get us out.

BETTY (GOES DOWN *to* L.). I got you in? (REYNOLD GOES UP *to desk with* CLARA)

ENTER PAT. D. C. *hurriedly.*

PAT. Betty Albright, instead of standing here jollying the public, you'd better go into that dining-room. There's going to be a riot. We won't have a husband left among us. Tom says I and my moleskin coat can go to a place he has never mentioned in my presence before. (PAT., SHESHA *and* URA *crowd* DOWN *front, much excited*)

BETTY. But what have I done?

PAT. Done? (*Forcefully*) You've taken the husbands out of the home!

SHESHA. Jim says no home was ever like this.

URA. John refuses to eat a meal at home. He's sure there is some cryptic meaning in your reason for running

this restaurant. (TOM DUGGAN *comes over to* THORNTON'S *table, asks if he can join party.* LILY *and* THORNTON *consent.* TOM *beckons to a tiny peroxide blonde. She trips over. The waiters pull several tables together to make room for all*)

PAT. (*turns and sees her husband with tiny girl*). Goodness alive! Look at her! Infant's size! (THORNTON *and* LILY *rise.* JOHN *still clings to* LILY'S *hand.* LILY *withdraws it, laughing and tossing him her glove, which he kisses with mock ardor*)

SHESHA (*sarcastically*). Too bad she couldn't leave her hand! (JOHN *spies a dashing looking brunette with intelligent face and alert manner, the exact opposite of his wife. He motions for her to join them. She points to her friend, a very thin girl, and asks in pantomime if she may bring her along.* JOHN *nods and they come over. There is an interchange of introductions.* TOM DUGGAN *gives waiter bribe to bring them something not included in bill of fare. He is seated by the petite blonde;* JOHN *by the brunette; her friend takes seat next to* JIM LAMB, *who is very shy at first but warms under the young lady's encouragement*)

PAT. (*to* BETTY). You call this a restaurant?

BETTY (*beside herself with annoyance*). My dears, I'm so sorry! (GOES *to them*)

PAT.
SHESHA.
URA. } Then Act! Act! Act!

ENTER BOB *and* JANE SPINK D. L.

PAT. (*glances into dining-room, sees* TOM *take off girl's coat. He measures it and looks highly satisfied*). Oh, my moleskin coat! Who proposed this strike anyway!

JANE. I did.

URA. Then why weren't you on the job?

JANE (*links her arm in her husband's and* CROSSES *toward* D. R. *with much satisfaction.* BOB *chuckles*)

[EXIT D. R.

PAT. } (*with ejaculations of disgust*). It's all
SHESHA } her fault! (*They turn on* BETTY) It's
URA } all your fault!

SHESHA. Who's going to care for me now, I'd like to know?

PAT. Who'll buy my clothes?

URA. You've got to feed us!

BETTY. Stop it! You'll split my eardrums! You're a lot of ——

ALL THREE. Don't say it!

BETTY. I won't, but I'll think it.

PAT. (*trying conciliatory methods*). Come now, Betty, be a good girl and make it up with Thornton.

SHESHA. } Do, for our sakes.
URA. }

BETTY. Why, I should like to know?

PAT. Moral influence, my dear. If our husbands haven't a homelike place like this to hang out in, they'll come back to us.

BETTY. You'll take them back—after that? (*Points to the men making love to the girls*)

SHESHA (*almost weeping*). We've got to take them back.

URA. You don't expect us to go to work, do you?

BETTY. Ladies, you can do with your husbands what you please, but I know what I'm going to do with mine!

[EXIT D. L.

SHESHA (*amazed*). What do you suppose she is going to do?

URA. There was blood in her eye!

PAT. You don't suppose ——

SHESHA. Let's get out of here! There's going to be shooting and I don't want to get hit.

PAT. And not one of us can drive a car! And all the street car men on strike!

ALL THREE (*disappointed. Slowly*). We'll have to walk. (*Music turns with,* "There Will be a Hot Time in the Old Town To-night." *They* EXIT D. R. *hurriedly.* ENTER D. C. TOM DUGGAN *holding the little blonde's*

hand like a child; JOHN NUT *follows, talking gaily with the dashing brunette;* JIM LAMB *brings up the rear, enraptured at his sentimental dissipation, the thin girl clinging to him and having the time of her life with the timid professor. Music ceases. They all* EXIT D. R. *and can be heard laughing and talking as they bundle into the automobiles and drive away, singing some popular air*)

ENTER BETTY D. L.

BETTY (*grimly*). Clara, tell the head waiter to see that no one enters this room but Thornton and Lily de Longpré. Then you come back.

CLARA. Very well. [EXIT D. C. *closing the doors*

REYNOLD. Shall I go?

BETTY. You go out there in the street and stay until the three of us are together, then you come in.

REYNOLD. Want me as a witness?

BETTY. Don't talk, go! (EXIT REYNOLD D. R. BETTY *sees* THORNTON *and* LILY *coming from* C.)

[EXIT D. L.

ENTER THORNTON *and* LILY D. C.

LILY (*seeing* BETTY *as she* GOES *out. To* THORNTON). Be careful, she's listening!

THORNTON (*grandiloquently*). Ah, Lily, this is the happiest evening of my life. (*Makes grimace*)

LILY. It would have been for me, too, but for those stupid interruptions. Oh, Thorny, how different you are from other men! (*Clings to him seductively, he hands her to tête-à-tête* L. *and seats himself beside her to the* R. *They gaze ardently at each other*)

ENTER BETTY D. L., CLARA D. C. *and* REYNOLD D. R. BETTY *motions for him to be silent. He remains* R. THORNTON *has seen* BETTY *come in; he puffs out pompously and awaits* BETTY'S *onslaught with much satisfaction. When* BETTY *gets to where they sit*

she quickly extends her hand. Afraid that she is going to throw something, they spring up, almost overturning the tête-à-tête.

BETTY (*smiling amiably*). How are you, good people? So sorry I was too busy to give you personal attention. Was your dinner satisfactory, Thornton? And yours, Lily?

THORNTON (*completely taken aback, stares stupidly*). Good Lord, it didn't work! (*Drops on seat*)

BETTY (GOES *to* REYNOLD, *pats his cheek*). Poor deserted boy!

THORNTON (*starts* UP). Oh, I say ——

LILY (*aside to him*). She's bluffing. Don't give way. Keep it up. (*He tries to look happy, but cannot.* BETTY *continues caressing* REYNOLD, *much to the young man's astonishment and discomfort as he glances toward* CLARA, *who is seated at desk with back to them*) Make her jealous. (THORNTON *puts his arm around* LILY'S *waist*)

BETTY (*turns and sees the embrace*). Oh, I see the rumor is correct. Then you are engaged?

THORNTON (*starts to protest,* LILY *nudges him. He stutters*). Ye-s. (*Puffs out*) Oh, yes!

BETTY. So glad to hear it. So are Reynold and I.

REYNOLD. Wha —— Oh, I say!

BETTY. Why, Reynold, you're not going to withdraw your proposal, are you?

REYNOLD. Proposal?

BETTY. Didn't you say, "If you are not going to take him back, why don't you get a divorce and marry me?"

REYNOLD. Yes, but ——

BETTY (*sweetly*). You haven't changed your mind so soon, have you?

REYNOLD (*glances at* CLARA, *who turns and motions for him to consent*). Oh, I'd be tickled to death. (*Gazes about in helpless confusion*)

BETTY. Too bad we shall have to wait for the stupid formality of a divorce. Perhaps, not to delay the game, we might resort to the new-fangled contract system. I

am sure no words being said over Rennie and me could add to the sanctity of our love. (*Draws his head to her and fondles him*) Isn't that so, sweetheart? (*The poor lad is frightened to a tremble, gazes beseechingly toward* CLARA, *who turns back to desk, pretending to be very busy*)

THORNTON (*jumps away from* LILY). Great God, what has come over you? I'm your husband. I'm your ——

BETTY (*sweetly*). Boss? Oh, no, I'm boss of my own soul.

THORNTON. You seem to forget that you're my wife.

BETTY. Only in the eyes of the law; in the eyes of the world (*Makes a gesture toward dining-rooms*) Lily should occupy that place.

THORNTON. What a confounded fool I've made of myself! (*Turns on* LILY) And it was all through you. You said she would jump into my arms when she saw me in yours.

LILY. Thornton, how can you so misrepresent?

THORNTON. You deny it?

LILY. I most certainly do.

REYNOLD. Didn't I beg you to let Thornton alone?

LILY (*laughs*). Not so any one could notice it. You begged me to make a clear field for you.

REYNOLD (*to* THORNTON). Did you ever see such a liar?

THORNTON. Never in all my life. Out! Out, I say! You came near wrecking my home, but if it goes to smash it won't be because of you!

LILY (*running toward* D. R. *calling feebly*). Help! Help! He's going to —— (EXIT D. R. REYNOLD GOES *to* CLARA, *whispers to her, she looks up laughing, he puts his arm around her and they quietly* EXIT D. R.)

THORNTON. Betty, won't you forgive your cranky old husband? I swear I'll never grumble again if you'll only take me back.

BETTY. And you still believe man is woman's superior?

THORNTON. Superior! Most of us haven't sense enough to come in out of the wet.

BETTY. Then, if you wish it, I'll be a wife to you again.

THORNTON (*starts to embrace her*). Wish it!

BETTY (*holds him off*). With one proviso—that you permit me to maintain my economic independence.

THORNTON. But, Betty, our home?

BETTY. Home is the happy moments we pass together. (*Holds out her arms to him*) May I come home now?

THORNTON (*clasps her in his arms*). To the devil with tradition! I've got my wife back.

CURTAIN

RURAL PLAYS

JUST PLAIN FOLKS

Rural Drama in Three Acts. Six Males, Four Females.

By Anthony E. Wills

One interior scene. A domestic drama giving a matter-of-fact description of life in a New England family. Plays two and a half hours.

PRICE 25 CENTS

COAST FOLKS

Rural Drama in Five Acts. Seven Males, Five Females

By George M. Rosener

One interior, one exterior scene. The plot is original and skilfully developed, presenting a true picture of coast life with intensely dramatic situations. Plays two and a half hours.

PRICE 25 CENTS

THE GREAT WINTERSON MINE

Rural Comedy in Three Acts. Six Males. Four Females

By Gordon V. May

Two scenes. The entire cast affords excellent opportunity for the display of characteristic individuality, and is replete with a rapid succession of stage situations. Plays two hours.

PRICE 25 CENTS

THE MAN FROM MAINE

Rural Drama in Five Acts. Nine Males, Three Females

By Charles Townsend

A drama representing city life, the hero of which is a wide-awake young man of the "down east" type and whose native shrewdness enables him to hold his own with city wits. Plays two hours.

PRICE 25 CENTS

NEW ENGLAND FOLKS

Rural Drama in Three Acts. Eight Males, Four Females

By Anthony E. Wills

One interior scene. A simple, but intensely interesting story of village life wherein the pathetic passages are well balanced by the situations which elicit roars of merriment. Plays two hours.

PRICE 25 CENTS

OAK FARM

Rural Drama in Three Acts. Seven Males, Four Females

By Anthony E. Wills

One interior scene. The whole action of the play is bright and full of absorbing interest, with a thrilling climax. Plays two and a half hours.

PRICE 25 CENTS

SQUIRE TOMPKINS' DAUGHTER

Rural Drama in Five Acts. Five Males, Two Females

By Arthur L. Buzzell

Three interior, one exterior scene. The action turns on a cunningly devised plot involving forgery and mock marriage, but which is happily frustrated at the last moment by the unmasking of the conspirators. Plays two and a half hours.

PRICE 25 CENTS

COMEDIES AND DRAMAS

NEVER AGAIN

A farce in 3 acts, by Anthony E. Wills. 7 male, 5 female characters. 1 interior scene throughout. Plays a full evening. Rufus Fletcher, a crabbed husband and father, refuses a satifactory reference to Dora, a maid he has discharged. In Marie, the new maid, Rufus discovers an attractive dancer to whom he had been very attentive at a recent ball. Marie confides this episode to Dora, and the schemes devised and the pranks played by them upon Rufus to punish him for refusing the reference, lead to many most amusing complications and to an entirely unexpected climax.

PRICE 25 CENTS

THE FROZEN TRAIL

A drama in 4 acts, by George M. Rosener. 8 male, 3 female characters (by doubling, 6 males, 3 females). 2 interior scenes. Time, 2½ hours. This drama is replete with human interest from start to final curtain. Alaska, the last of the Beothics, a once powerful Indian tribe under whose spell both Jack and Cedric fall, is a combination of true womanhood, love and constancy. Cross Fox, her father, is a typical Indian who plays a strong part. Helen, the ingenue, and her father, an old but ardent wooer, furnish excellent comedy roles,

PRICE 25 CENTS

JACK DENTON'S DEVOTION

A naval drama in 3 acts, by Gordon V. May. 8 male. 5 female characters. 1 interior, 1 exterior scene. Time, 2¾ hours. Philip Ashley, with the connivance of the United States Consul, forms a plot to dethrone the Prince of Alesia, an Algerian principality, to carry off, and espouse the Prince's daughter and proclaim himself the Prince. He is frustrated in his final attempt to abduct the Princess by two naval officers. The insurgents attack the Consulate, but are repulsed and defeated by the guns of the U. S. Cruiser "Victory." The incidental situations and final climax are very effective.

PRICE 25 CENTS

AFTER THE HONEYMOON

A farce in 1 act, by Wallace Nisbet. 2 male, 3 female characters. 1 plain interior scene. Time, about 50 minutes. An entertaining little sketch, easy to stage and easy to play. A bundle of letters in the wrong hands causes all the amusement and all the trouble.

PRICE 25 CENTS

A BACHELOR'S ELOPEMENT

A comedy in 3 acts, by William and Josephine Giles. 4 male, 2 female characters. 1 interior, 1 exterior scene, both easy. Time, 2 hours. Modern costumes. A case of mistaken identity is the theme of this play. The squire has a spinster sister, Nancy Evans by name, also a daughter by the same name, commonly called Nan. Nan is sought in marriage by Billy Nash, but the squire has determined she shall marry a wealthy old bachelor, Tom Green. To further his plans, the squire induces Green to "make up" as Billy, and how the plan succeeds is told in the play in the most amusing and humorous manner.

PRICE 25 CENTS

A FOOTBALL ROMANCE

A college comedy in 4 acts, by Anthony E. Wills. 9 male, 4 female characters. 1 interior, 2 exterior scenes. Time, about 2½ hours. Costumes modern. A capital piece for amateurs, abounding in the stirring, breezy atmosphere of college life and the spirit of the great game of football. A plot with lack of love making, replete with incidents, and a surprising climax enables us to recommend very highly this play for colleges.

PRICE 25 CENTS

COMEDIES AND DRAMAS

PETER PIPER'S TROUBLES

A comedy in 4 acts, by Jos. H. Slater. 5 male, 3 female characters. Costumes of to-day. 2 interior scenes, both simple. Time, a full evening. Peter's troubles are caused largely by his desire to oblige his friends, and are of a social, financial and business character. He is employed in the law office of two typical unscrupulous pettifoggers, Grubbins & Bundy, who endeavor to appropriate Doris Chester's fortune, but in the end are foiled by Peter. Betsy, the comedy lead, shares with Peter in the fun making, as well as Adolphus Gudgeon, the English dude. Easily staged. Sure to please.

PRICE 25 CENTS

A FIGHT AGAINST FATE

A drama in 4 acts, by John Rupert Farrell. 8 male, 2 female characters. 1 exterior, 2 interior scenes. Time, 2 hours. Major Remming, an escaped convict, determines to reform and break away from his associates. He marries Alice Summers and lives at her father's house. His former companions trace him and threaten his betrayal to the sheriff unless he aids them in a new scheme. At the moment of apparent success, they are all three arrested. By his wife's stratagem he escapes, but soon meets with a fatal accident. The movement of the play is intensely dramatic, but the tension is relieved by ingenious comedy parts.

PRICE 25 CENTS

THE UPSETTING OF JABEZ STRONG

A comedy in 3 acts, by Helen P. Kane. 5 male, 4 female characters. 2 easy interior scenes. Modern costumes. Time, 1½ hours. Jabez Strong, a wealthy stock operator, desires that his daughter Daisy should marry a fellow-operator, Burton by name. This plan is bitterly opposed by Daisy, who is in love with Jack. Through Miriam's influence over Jabez, and through Dana's and Jack's knowledge of the previous record of Burton, whose rascality they expose, Daisy and Jack are finally made supremely happy. Jabez is an excellant, eccentric old man part, while those of Jack and Daisy are brimful of "go" and comedy. Easily staged. Highly recommended.

PRICE 25 CENTS

WHEN WOMEN RULE

A farce in 1 act, by Agnes Electra Platt. 2 male, 4 female characters. 1 simple interior scene. Time, about 15 minutes. The scene is laid ten years hence, when the presidential office is filled by a suffragist. The leading character is secretary to the president, in fact all the officials are suffragists. The two male characters are Willie Walters, "Mother's Sunshine," and Wick Lee Sling, a typical Chinaman. Has also a good soubrette part.

PRICE 15 CENTS

UNDER SAILING ORDERS

A comedy in 1 act, by Helen P. Kane. 1 male, 1 female character. 1 interior scene, plain or elaborate, as desired. Time, 50 minutes. Costumes modern. The action occurs in the cabin of the yacht "Lorelei" anchored off Bar Harbor. A very clever sketch, full of action and brightly written. The climax is a true illustration of the old adage "Faint heart ne'er won fair lady."

PRICE 25 CENTS

PLAYS WE RECOMMEND

Fifteen Cents Each (Postage, 1 Cent Extra)

Unless Otherwise Mentioned

		Acts	Males	Females	Time
Arabian Nights	Farce	3	4	5	2¼h
Bundle of Matches (27c.)	Comedy	2	1	7	1½h
Crawford's Claim (27c.)	Drama	3	9	3	2¼h
Her Ladyship's Niece (27c.)	Comedy	4	4	4	1½h
Just for Fun (27c.)	"	3	2	4	2h
Men, Maids, Matchmakers	" (27c.)	3	4	4	2h
Our Boys	"	3	6	4	2h
Puzzled Detective	Farce	3	5	3	1h
Three Hats	"	3	5	4	2h
Timothy Delano's Courtship	Comedy	2	2	3	1h
Up-to-Date Anne	"	2	2	3	1h
White Shawl (27c.)	Farce	2	3	3	1½h
Fleeing Flyer	"	1	4	3	1¼h
From Punkin' Ridge	Drama	1	6	3	1¼h
Handy Solomon	Farce	1	2	2	20m
Hoosier School	"	1	5	5	30m
Kiss in the Dark	"	1	2	3	45m
Larry	"	1	4	4	45m
Love Birds' Matrimonial Agency	"	1	3	4	30m
Married Lovers	Comedy	1	2	4	45m
Ma's New Boarders (27c.)	Farce	1	4	4	30m
Mrs. Forester's Crusade	"	1	1	2	30m
New Pastor	Sketch	1	2	2	30m
Relations	Farce	1	3	1	20m
Standing Room Only	Comedy	1	3	1	35m
Stormy Night	"	1	3	1	40m
Surprises (27c.)	Farce	1	2	3	30m
Tangles (27c.)	"	1	4	2	30m
Little Rogue Next Door	"	1	2	3	40m
'Till Three P. M.	"	1	2	1	20m
Train to Mauro	"	1	2	1	15m
When Women Rule	"	1	2	4	15m
Won by a Kodak	Comedy	1	2	3	50m
April Fools	Farce	1	3	0	30m
Fun in a Schoolroom	"	1	4	0	40m
Little Red Mare	"	1	3	0	35m
Manager's Trials	"	1	9	0	45m
Medica	"	1	7	0	35m
Mischievous Bob	Comedy	1	6	0	40m
Cheerful Companion	Dialogue	1	0	2	25m
Dolly's Double	"	1	1	1	20m
Drifted Apart	"	1	1	1	30m
Gentle Touch	"	1	1	1	30m
John's Emmy	"	1	1	1	20m
Point of View	"	1	1	1	20m
Professor's Truant Glove	"	1	1	1	20m
Belles of Blackville	Minstrel	1	0	any no.	2h
Sweet Family (27c.)	Entertainment	1	0	8	1h
Conspirators (27c.)	Comedy	2	0	12	40m
A Day and a Night (27c.)	"	2	0	10	1h
Gertrude Mason, M.D. (27c.)	Farce	1	0	7	30m
In Other People's Shoes	Comedy	1	0	8	50m
Maidens All Forlorn (27c.)	"	3	0	6	1¼h
Mary Ann	"	1	0	5	30m
Romance of Phyllis (27c.)	"	3	0	4	1¼h
Fuss vs. Feathers	Mock Trial	1	4	4	30m
Tanglefoot vs. Peruna	" "	1	7	18	1½h
Great Libel Case	" "	1	21	0	2h

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 017 401 058 4

PLAYS WE RECO

For Schools and Colleges

Twenty-five cents (Postage 2 cents extra)

		Acts	*Males*	*Females*	*Time*
Irish Eden	Comedy	3	8	6	2h
Kidnapped Freshman	Farce	3	12	4	2¼h
Matrimonial Tiff	Farce	1	2	1	1h
Little Savage	Comedy	3	4	4	2h
Lodgers Taken In	"	3	6	4	2½h
Miss Mosher of Colorado	"	4	5	3	2h
Miss Neptune	"	2	3	8	1¼h
My Uncle from India	"	4	13	4	2½h
Never Again	Farce	3	7	5	2h
New England Folks	Drama	3	8	4	2¼h
Next Door	Comedy	3	5	4	2h
Oak Farm	Comedy	3	7	4	2½h
Riddles	"	3	3	3	1¼h
Rosebrook Farm	"	3	6	9	1¾h
Stubborn Motor Car	"	3	7	4	2½h
Too Many Husbands	Farce	2	8	4	2h
When a Man's Single	Comedy	3	4	4	2h
Where the Lane Turned	"	4	7	5	2h
After the Honeymoon	Farce	1	2	3	50m
Biscuits and Bills	Comedy	1	3	1	1¼h
Chance at Midnight	Drama	1	2	1	25m
Conquest of Helen	Comedy	1	3	2	1h
The Coward	Drama	1	5	?	30m
Sheriff of Tuckahoe	Western Sk.	1	3	1	1h
Bashful Mr. Bobbs	Comedy	3	4	7	2½h
Whose Widow	"	1	5	4	50m
Alice's Blighted Profession	Sketch	1	0	8	50m
Regular Girls	Entertainment	1	0	any no.	1h
100% American	Comedy	1	0	15	1½h
Parlor Patriots	"	1	0	12	1h
Fads and Fancies	Sketch	1	0	17	1h
Mr. Loring's Aunts	Comedy	3	0	13	1¼h
My Son Arthur	"	1	2	8	¾h
Sewing Circle Meets	Entertainment	1	0	10	1¼h
Every Senior	Morality play	1	0	8	40m
Bride and Groom	Farce	3	5	5	2¼h
Last Chance	Comedy	2	2	12	1½h
Bubbles	"	3	4	3	1½h
Hurricane Wooing	"	3	4	3	1½h
Peggy's Predicament	"	1	0	5	½h
Found in a Closet	"	1	1	3	20m
Slacker (?) for the Cause	Sketch	1	3	1	20m
Baby Scott	Farce	3	5	4	2¼h
Billy's Bungalow	Comedy	3	5	4	2h
College Chums	"	3	9	3	2h
Delegates from Denver	Farce	2	3	10	¾h
Football Romance	Comedy	4	9	4	2½h
Held for Postage	Farce	2	4	3	1¼h
In the Absence of Susan	"	3	4	6	1½h
Transaction in Stocks	Comedy	1	4	1	45m
Aunt Dinah's Quilting Party	Entertainment	1	5	11	2h
Bachelor Maids' Reunion	"	1	2	any no.	1½h
In the Ferry House	"	1	15	11	1½h
Rustic Minstrel Show	"	1	any no.	any no.	1½h
Ye Village Skewl of Long Ago	"	2	any no.	any no.	2h
Rainbow Kimona	"	2	0	9	1½h
Rosemary	Comedy	4	0	14	1½h
Pharaoh's Knob	"	1	1	12	1h